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Halo Over Hoboken

The Memoirs of John Perkins Field
as told to

John Leroy Bailey

"Much has been said about the city of Hoboken, occasionally with more truth than poetry, but it has remained for John Perkins Field to depict the mile-square city in a book of scope and depth that in its own sphere compares to an outstanding movie like *Waterfront,* because his autobiographical method reveals the city from so many different facets rather than in a concentrated punch, and does so in moods from grim to gay, brutally violent to ludicrous, but with an underlying warmth and love of neighbor.

"Free from any bitterness in spite of all his troubles, Mr. Field has produced a book to grip readers from anywhere—not just Hobokenites—for it contains thrills enough to satisfy the most insatiable 'who-dunit' fan, facts to enthrall history lovers, the sort of incidents that those not afraid to laugh out loud thrive on, plus that intangible 'pearl of great price' for readers who, however badly battered, are not completely despairing—the courageous spirit of a man who had to take life on its own terms, did it smilingly and has come through the winner."

—Walton Williams, *The Shield*

"A book that every resident of Hoboken should read and enjoy."

—The Honorable John J. Grogan,
Mayor of Hoboken

Halo Over Hoboken

Halo Over Hoboken

THE MEMOIRS OF JOHN PERKINS FIELD

AS TOLD TO

JOHN LEROY BAILEY

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FIRST EDITION

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To my wife

EDITH FIELD

to whom I owe the peace, the privacy, and the patience that make possible the concentration of a frequently cantankerous and exacting husband bent upon a pet project, I dedicate this book.

By easing my discomforts and by rallying my enthusiasms, she has almost made me forget that one of my underpinnings is

NO LEG TO STAND ON.

JOHN PERKINS FIELD

Contents

Prelude 9
I No Leg to Stand On 13
II River Daze 20
III Hoboken Holocaust 29
IV Turn of the Century 39
V Back to the Indians 47
VI That Old Gang of Mine 52
VII The Yanks Are Coming 62
VIII The Water "Woiks" 73
IX Blood on the Moon 78
X Stevens Heyday 89
XI I Am Domesticated 100
XII Bluegrass 105
XIII City Hall 109
XIV Aha! My Proud Beauty! 119
XV One Moose to Another 126
XVI No Place Like Home 131
In Passing 137

Prelude

Hoboken is the whining of cranes and the strident shriek of pulleys.

She is the stevedore's curse, the union organizer's belly laugh.

She is the D., L. & W. Ferry whistle cautioning an impertinent tug.

She is the penniless drifter sneaking another at the Clambroth House.

You find her in the child that rushes after an errant ball into the path of your car only to thumb her nose at you and eternity, in the octogenarian grandmother who refuses to move to Fairlawn when her family scrapes together the down payment on a new house.

You find her in the grisly, tobacco-reeking ancient who calls himself Struber and buzzes your ear about the time when he served Al Smith in Meyer's Hotel basement; in the boy who likes "kids," off to State Teachers College on a Monday morning to prepare for a post in School No. 6, though his father begs him to chuck it and go partners in the Chevrolet agency.

Even the low-necked barmaid with the provocative breasts, the "come-on" smile, then when your money's gone, the facial freeze of the professional teaser—even she is part of the marrow of Hoboken.

Take the condemned, four-in-a-room tenement on which the owner can't collect rent. Take double-parked cars on a one-way street. Take the pool of blood fresh flowed from a bullet wound in a dock hoodlum's thigh. Take the humid heat of a July night on a mattress desperately thrown down upon the fire escape. All go into the montage that is Hoboken.

The ghosts of Colonel Stevens, Hetty Green, and Stephen Foster give the city a vanished grace and opulence, Puerto Rico rubbing elbows with Little Italy, the shamrock and a Bavarian stein add the cosmopolite touch.

And the Hoboken story, deep in the hidden and the veiled, in the ironic cycle of cause and effect, in the incidence of circumstance, is all of these things.

This book may reveal to you the nostalgic pull that won't let an old-timer go.

It may suggest the desire for human kinship that underlies the gruffness of a first encounter.

At least from it you may find that Hoboken really has a heart, even if you cannot see the halo.

Halo Over Hoboken

CHAPTER I

No Leg to Stand On

As the new century rolled in, the Hudson River had become more a bond than a barrier between New York City and New Jersey. The ferryboat traffic was constantly increasing, for the Garden State's wide countryside enticed more and more residents of the metropolis to escape from its oppressive heat for "a day in the country."

Even so, I gather that there was a momentous mood about Father's decision in 1893 to transport his family, bag and baggage, to Hoboken. Undoubtedly in the minds of a few of my childhood friends we were pioneers setting out to brave the dangers of a new frontier.

For that matter, the rutted streets, the beer gardens, and the mixture of nationalities offered a suitable setting for self-dramatizing in such a family venture, had my father been so inclined. However, despite all the warmth of home life with which our closely-knit family was blessed, there was sufficient challenge in the plain realities my parents faced at that time to make any play-acting superfluous.

I wonder about Mother and Father at that time when I, a much-beloved child, was also an unwitting heartbreak. . . .

Dark. Cold. A young mother's sleep is broken by the whimper of a child in pain. She raises herself to speak quietly into the shadows of the next room.

"Sssh, Johnny. Go back to sleep!"

Pain. Thirst. The four-year-old's right leg hurts him.

"Water, Mommy; some water, please."

The woman leaves her bed and hurries to the boy's crib. He is uncovered, chilled, saturated with his own sweat. "Johnny, you just got to keep the covers on."

"But, Mommy, it hurts!" The suppressed sob tears at her heart and spurs her into action. Hastily but gently she changes him into a dry nightgown, brings him a drink of soothing water, then gently massages his throbbing leg. Whimpering, he drops off to sleep, a troubled sleep, after a while. She tucks the covers around him and tiptoes back to her own bed.

It seems like ten seconds later when Father struggles from under the covers, grunting like a porpoise, and sits on the edge of the bed.

"Time to get up!"

She springs out of bed, grabs her bathrobe, and makes for the kitchen to light the stove and revive all spirits with the incense of good coffee.

In no time Father is his cheerful self. Do I hear him proclaim on this memorable morning, "We're going west, my dear wife; we're going west. To Hoboken!"

And so to Hoboken!

Good old MacDougal Street in New York City's Bohemian Greenwich Village was a perfect vantage point from which to imbibe the spirit of a great city, to learn the facts of life from saint or sinner. But Hoboken—ah!

In a way, I have regretted that I was not born in Hoboken, but I couldn't help it at the time. I was introduced to this world on MacDougal Street, Greenwich Village, New York City, on December 12, 1889, sound in body and, at that time, in mind.

In 1891 Mayor Edward R. Stanton recommended a new county road, new county parks, new schools, an enlarged police force, an established fire department, and warned the residents against dumping garbage and ashes into the streets and vacant lots.

Iniquity had got its foot over the civic threshold. Part of Mayor Stanton's annual message to the City Council dealt with the indiscriminate granting by the City Council of licenses to disreputable resorts that boldly flaunted their vice under the protection of the city. Stanton was determined to wipe them out: "They are a curse to the community, and a detriment to the honest and upright dealer who conducts a reputable house."

The Police Department of Hoboken in 1891 came in for a ribbing by His Honor. He recommended rigid discipline, strict performance of duty. The Fire Department needed more hydrants, and Ferry Street, in poor condition, detracted from the beauty of the city.

Too, Mayor Stanton held up a warning finger on the breakdown of the sewerage system: "The urgency of some settled system of sewerage becomes daily more apparent. A menace to the city which has existed for many years and the abatement of which will prove an undisguised blessing is the Ravine Road Sewer." He lamented the inundation of lands and the overflowing and deposit of sewage on the meadowland because of the break in the Ravine Road sewer pipe.

At least Washington Street had been electric-lighted since 1884.

Evidently, Father and Mother found Hoboken a livable place despite the threats to peace, health, and happiness, for they stayed on there, barring a short residence in New York City, until they died. I should have been somewhat discouraged.

Hope for a more sanitary Hoboken rose when the first Board of Health was organized in 1891. St. Mary's Hospital was already serving the community.

If in 1900, Washington Street, the principal business thoroughfare of the city, was full of holes and ruts, what must have been its condition in the year the family moved to the New Jersey paradise? I can see the family ancestors, the Perrigieux, after whom, by the way, a town in France had been named, raising their noses in disdain and spurning Hoboken as "beneath them."

But my infancy was troubled with other than civic considerations. On the last Sunday in August, 1891, the trouble started. Father said that when I awoke the next morning, I was unable to walk. The family doctor shook his head and called it rheumatism, and for four days treated me under that diagnosis. No change. Then Father decided to see another practitioner, a Professor Nammock. He took one look at me and pronounced my affliction infantile paralysis and sent me to Dr. Virgil P. Gibney of the New York Orthopedic Hospital, who ordered electric treatments and the use of a brace. In turn, Dr. Gibney sent me to a Dr. Sacks, who, through electric treatment, located paralysis of the motor muscle of the right leg. Collaborating, Dr. Gibney then performed an operation to lengthen the leg and turn the foot. Apparently, they were satisfied that the operation was a success.

A year later, a Dr. Hollister examined me and advised me to see Dr. Whitman of the Hospital for the Ruptured and Crippled in New York City.

"Leg's shorter than the good one. Bone of bad leg is growing curved," Whitman laconically observed, as he looked up from my exposed limb at Father. Father's eyes asked the question before he could get out the words to frame it. Whitman answered him, "I might lengthen the leg a little by straightening the knee. Got to perform a tendon grafting by taking muscle of hammer toe and putting switch in the foot. Once it's healed, electricity ought to develop the leg."

In the long run, I, John Perkins Field, underwent a course of operations, treatments, and hospital residence that blurred into a confusion of iodoform smell, intervals of white-uniformed ministrations, but, above all, the intermittent stabs of pain shooting through my right leg. Seventeen months in the New York Orthopedic Hospital is a long time for a child to lie in bed—all the time under the care of special nurses.

Discharged from the hospital, I had a withered right leg two and one half inches shorter than my left. Consequently, the doctors required me to wear a special shoe and brace. After six years they permitted me to discard the brace, but I had to continue to wear a raised shoe with the uppers made still by a whalebone inner support.

Luckily, when I grew older, John Rozicka, a shoemaker friend of mine, originated for me a shoe-within-a-shoe device that now enables me to adopt the usual type of man's footwear over an inside shoe.

At least my middle name, Perkins, had proved a blessing to Father. At the time of my birth he was employed by Sharp and Perkins, tea merchants, with warehouses and offices in the Franklin Street, New York, neighborhood, and with plantations in Japan and China. Isaac Perkins, one member of the firm, was the brother of George W. Perkins, J. P. Morgan's partner. When Father named me John Perkins, he did not know that his generous employer was to spend over three thousand dollars on doctors' fees and treatments in an effort to help his namesake regain the use of a much manhandled limb.

In time the charms of Hoboken beckoned to Father and promised more healthful surroundings. In 1893 he deposited the family at 1100 Washington Street.

When I was seven, Mother died. My older brother, William, was perhaps that one of the children who missed her most, because I was too young, while my younger brother, Robert, had even fainter recollections of her.

They tell me that Mother was a graduate of New York State Teachers College, now known as Hunter College. In the days when bustles were in style, my father, John Field, used to strut before her in Washington Square like a mating turkey cock, with his high hat, frock coat, striped trousers, and flashy cane. In those days a man would sing and ogle as he passed the lady of his heart. Apparently, Father's singing flirtation was a howling success, wolf or no wolf, because Mother accepted him in short order.

You may still read in a book called *Gangs of New York* by Herbert Asbury an account of the brutal murder of one James H. Noe, hardware and brush manufacturer. That man was Mother's grandfather. She was nine years old at the time. Luckily her grandfather had not taken her with him on that fatal Sunday morning of August 22, 1875, to check on the progress made in the construction of his new factory at 275 Greenwich Street, New York City. Entering the structure, James Noe climbed the ladders and the temporary stairways to the roof.

He surprised none other than Dandy Johnny Dolan, expert at eyegouging and member of the notorious Whyos Gang. Dandy Johnny was placidly ripping away the new leaden gutters preparatory to selling them. Taken aback, he felt in his pocket for the copper band with the sharp end projecting under the thumb, the implement with which he did such a thorough job on his rivals' eyes. Around his neck he wore a handkerchief with a vivid red border. He sported quite a few of these red- or blue-bordered handkerchiefs in his strolls around Mulberry Bend or Five Points, swinging his elaborately carved cane, its head usually representing the likeness of an animal.

In a trice he had sized up Mr. Noe, had noted that the gentleman carried a handsome cane with a metal handle carved in the likeness of a monkey. Seemingly subdued, Dolan permitted Noe to lead him downstairs until they reached the ground floor. Then his sluggish brain conceived the desire to kill. He seized a piece of iron pipe from the floor and crushed the skull of the manufacturer, who was to die a week later. From his unconscious victim, he stole a few dollars, a gold watch and chain, and—what a weakness!—the monkey-headed cane. And then with unpardonable stupidity he tied his own flashy handkerchief about Noe's face. The story goes that Dolan appeared at the hangout of the Whyos Gang near Mulberry Bend with one of Noe's eyes in his pocket, but no one authenticates this bit of hearsay.

Of course Detective Joseph M. Dorcy, assigned to the case, soon found out about the pawning of a watch and chain in an out-of-the-way shop on Chatham Street, now Park Row. With the identification of the handkerchief found on the fatally injured Noe as Dolan's by two of his cast-off streetwalking sweethearts, Detective Dorcy found a keener scent. The monkey-headed cane displayed by Dandy Johnny Dolan on his constitutionals about Mulberry Bend clinched the evidence. He confessed to the attack and the pawning of the watch and chain. On April 21, 1876, in the courtyard of the Tombs, he cut his last figure at the end of a rope.

After Mother's death in 1896, Father moved the family back to New York City to Perry Street, and Father and we three boys lived with my aunt Jo. Five years later, however, found the Fields again residing in Hoboken. Here Father renewed his acquaintance with Margaret Dielman, a friend of the family, and in 1901 married her. My stepmother filled a much-felt need in our lives, so much so that ultimately we accepted her without question.

Even after returning to Hoboken, we boys frequently went back to New York to spend several days, even weeks, with our relatives. I remember, at the age of eight, witnessing in the Perry and Charles Street-Waverly Place section many a pitched battle between two notorious neighborhood gangs of the day, the Hudson Dusters and the Humpty Jackson Gang. Often the roofs of buildings would provide vantage points from which members of one gang would pelt their opponents with bottles and other handy missiles. The neighborhood gang, unfortunately, has become, in certain sections, a fixed institution in New York City.

In August, 1902, my doctor requested Father to bring me to his office for the purpose of being examined by an eminent surgeon. Dr. Gibney, president of the New York Orthopedic Hospital, called in a foreign-looking gentleman, who examined my leg and merely shook his head, then withdrew into a corner with Gibney to converse in broken English. We learned later that he was Dr. Adolf Lorenz, the famous Austrian professor of orthopedic surgery from the University of Vienna. He could do nothing for me, the first patient he examined during his American visit from autumn, 1902, until the winter of 1903. He was on his way to Chicago to operate on the daughter of an industrial magnate. The little girl, afflicted with bilateral luxation of the hip joints, was later successfully operated upon by the Austrian surgeon.

I, however, had no right leg to stand on.

CHAPTER II

River Daze

So I grew up with an unreliable leg. I never did dare to put too much weight on the appendage for fear it would fold up or collapse. But a handicap is a handicap. One just accepts it and, with a sense of humor, does the best he can with the limited locomotion he has been blessed with. Although I have no alibi for being alive today, no leg to stand on when it comes to justifying my existence, the blight of infantile paralysis has not seriously affected my outlook upon life. Despite the limp, I have enjoyed many a happy day—I might even say, a merry one—in this city of ships, Hoboken.

There were others, too, who were finding Hoboken a haven and a refuge. Charles A. Donovan, Hoboken chief of police for many years, reported in 1891 that the city was fast becoming a "mecca for tramps" driven from neighboring cities. The city was evidently one of the chief stopover spots for those ne'er-do-wells leisurely touring the country. "Between 6,000 and 7,000 lodged here during the year . . . these idle vagabonds, who are too lazy to work or perform any service except to beg and steal." Donovan recommended the abolishment of the Police Department's lodgers' room to discourage vagrancy. Likewise, that year, the chief reported twenty-five complaints against members of the police force, twenty of them for neglect of duty.

The city undoubtedly breathed a relaxing, restful air. On Saturdays occasional boys' camping parties would set up their tents and build their fires in the Elysian Fields, famous rustic expanse of wood and meadow set aside late in the eighteenth century by Colonel John Stevens. Milk, flour, and eggs supplied the pfannkuchen, and roasted sweet potatoes and fresh roasted chestnuts supplemented the meal.

Father, in the early days, would often take us boys for walks through what were left of the Elysian Fields and to Sybil's Cave on the River Road, where a lover might buy for his sweetheart for a penny a glass of refreshing spring water with "medicinal power." Pier 9, used by the East Asiatic Line, now covers the renowned landmark. The Savannah Line ultimately bought up much of the land that had once constituted the famous Elysian Fields area. At the foot of what is now Fifteenth Street, the Bolivar House still specialized in coconut cakes, nickel beer, and bolivars (pancake-sized ginger cakes with scalloped edges), and New Yorkers and other visitors knew it. Now Elysian Park, General Foods Warehouses, and various shipyards cover the original Elysian Fields.

I still played baseball in spite of my weak leg, but after I ran first base on a strike, some other member of my team completed the running for me.

Swimming, however, was my favorite sport because I could manage quite well in the water where the strength of my arms compensated for the lack of kick in my right leg. The gang often swam at Buckeye's on the north side of the Savannah Line Pier. Generally I wore long pants when I swam.

One day while my pal Duke and I were diving from the Savannah Line Dock with a few members of the gang, three boys from Hoboken's ritzier families were swimming about two hundred feet north of Buckeye's. Bob Inslow, George Barrick, and Wally Minster, out of our class, we didn't mix with, but we regarded them with amused tolerance as amateurs at the water sport. They finally attempted to swim from W. H. Fletcher's shipyard dock to a raft some distance out in the river. All three reached the raft safely, but on the return swim Wally Minster caught cramps halfway to the pier and yelled for help. His two companions became panicky and, although good swimmers, began to yell for aid instead of swimming out to the foundering Wally.

We had climbed up on the Savannah Line Dock for another dive when we caught the situation at a glance. In quick time I had Wally ashore, the St. Mary's Hospital ambulance arrived, and the attendants resuscitated the half-drowned boy.

Somehow or other in the confusion a reporter from the Hoboken *Observer* twisted his story so that the evening paper carried this headline: TWO CHUMS SAVE PAL FROM DROWNING. The story ran on to detailed plans for a party in honor of Bob Inslow and George Barrick, the heroes who were evidently enjoying the glory thrust upon them.

Duke, my pal, wanted me to speak up, and, when I wouldn't, visited the Riverside Club in desperation, laced himself with "courage," and shortly after beat up the two "heroes" to his satisfaction. Wally's family, however, never knew his actual rescuer.

Duke was my self-sworn protector. Though he relied a little too much on drink for support to his ego, he guarded me against danger and sometimes in his well-meaning solicitude made me more conscious than ever of my bad leg. Good-hearted and blustery, he saw to it that I got a straight deal at poker or a fair throw at craps. He liked fighting and hunting. Despite the efforts of the boys of the Riverside Club to keep him away from the bottle, Duke's father labeled them a bad influence on his son. I still recall the night at the club when Duke hid behind the door as his father demanded that the members of the club relinquish their foul clutches upon his son. The last I heard of him, Duke had enlisted in the United States Navy.

Fishing, in those days, provided a professional, as well as a sporting, interest. As the incoming tide swept up toward Guttenberg, striped and black bass, bluefish, shad, tomcods, even young swordfish succumbed to the bait and nets of fishermen. The Bolivar House served for a time as headquarters for the shad fishermen. Hung upon stout lines suspended between tall poles deeply rooted in the ground, their nets hung out to dry. During the night passing steamboats frequently damaged nets placed out on the river for a catch. The river was cleaner then, and fish, sold fresh, made an economical dish.

Hoboken in these days would have charmed any youngster who loved ships and water sports. He might pull in a mess of Jersey blues or catch a batch of crabs from the old Twelfth Street dock, where Haverstraw brick schooners and other rivertown craft frequently tied up.

He might climb, when no one was looking, the ratlines to the crosstrees of an occasional sailing vessel and watch the ice barges, anchored midway between the Jersey and the New York shores, awaiting the weekly tow which took them up the Hudson for reloading at the ramshackle icehouses.

He might grab a fishing line and down at Sybil's Cave on the River Walk below Stevens Castle at "Fisherman's Paradise" find a shady spot along the bank and dream between bites.

He might gather the ripe brown cattails from the nearby swamps and dry them in his mother's oven to use to light firecrackers on the Fourth of July. And while bed nets kept the mosquitoes off fairly well at night, a smoking "punk" nearby kept them at arm's length as one sat on the "stoop" of a summer evening.

But a boy got one of his biggest thrills out of the Fourth of July or Election Day bonfires, fed by barrels stolen from unwary grocers or cast-off packing cases, licking at the dark sky with massive tongues of flame.

In 1891 Hoboken had five schools in operation with School No. 6, now the Wallace School, under construction. Mayor Stanton gave himself and his Council a backhanded compliment when he stated: "The numerous private schools prove a welcome relief, as they, without cost to the city, provide for and educate hundreds of school children who otherwise would be a charge on the city."

Evidently about this time many German immigrants were pouring into the country via Hoboken, for the mayor placed, in his report, great emphasis upon a satisfactory method of teaching German in the public schools of the city. "The landing on our shores of a number of German-speaking steamship passengers renders a knowledge of the German language almost imperative in every branch of business. To place the study of German on a sound basis will be my ambition."

Industrial education, with which the Hoboken schools were experimenting in 1891, meant an elementary knowledge of tools and mechanical implements, not the teaching of a trade.

> A lack of proper consideration and development of the constructive faculties of the young tends to instill in the minds of our pupils when thrown on the business world inordinate desire for all those pursuits in life usually called genteel, those in which little or no manual labor is required. The great masses of the population must earn their livelihood by the sweat of their brows. Good skilled mechanics are in demand, and any system of education which impresses upon the young mind that it is not only a duty, but an honor to be skilled in any branch of industry must certainly commend itself.

Sound foresight!

But I do not remember too much about my schooling. We lived for the fun we would have after the dismissal bell.

Father's sister, Elizabeth Meyer—Aunt Lizzie to us—had a postoffice substation in her stationery store at 932 Washington Street, where most of the neighborhood gossip concentrated and sometimes originated. A widow with three children, she took upon herself the office of the family's guiding beacon or oracle, call it what you will. All our relatives used to consult her about everything from the new baby's croup cure to the best cut of beef for Sunday's dinner. Bill, Bob, and I liked to play cops and robbers with cousins Robert, Edith, and Olivia, but Father was always glad to see Aunt Lizzie moving afar off in the opposite direction, because when she was around he seldom held the spotlight. He could never get a word in edgewise.

The last attempt to restore the power in my right leg involved divine intervention. A friend of the family, Helen Kane, the daughter of a contractor whose place of business was located on Perry Street in New York, got the idea that what medicine and surgery could not accomplish, a miracle might.

She determined to whisk nine-year-old me off to the next novena at St. Anne's Roman Catholic Church, East Twelfth Street, New York City, where the afflicted were seemingly experiencing miraculous cures through contact with the bones of St. Anne. Abandoned crutches, braces, surgical appliances, and eyeglasses bore mute testimony to the power of the relic.

Father promised twenty-six converts to Catholicism upon evidence that I had been cured. Zealously, Miss Kane instructed me in the Roman Catholic catechism and convinced me that I had the faith.

Off we went to the church where the reverend father and his acolytes said special prayers over me and, removing the sacred bones of St. Anne from their glass case, touched them to my bared leg from hip to toe.

My leg was evidently so withered that cure, even through will power, was impossible. I was intended apparently by the Lord to endure my affliction and make the best of it. Nevertheless, during the year or more that I attended that same church, I saw many relieved of their afflictions through their faith.

Perhaps I should give you a picture of Father at this point. He never cut a wide swath in the meadow of success, but he kept the Field family together and happy through many trying years. He smoked a meerschaum persistently so that he could color the bowl, the habit evidently caught from the many German immigrants entering and settling in Hoboken about this time. He frequently scolded Bob and me for coming in late. As a matter of fact, we were slightly wild in our teens and twenties. We'd get "galloping consumption," he'd declare. "Why not get steady girls? Perhaps then they would send you home early nights!" That statement never made sense to me.

But we were not yet ready for the domestic trail.

Our favorite dessert on Sunday was ice cream, a quart of which Father purchased at Carl Muckelman's Ice Cream Parlor. One Sunday dinner concluded in a hurricane when Father, in the act of consuming his portion, broke a piece from a front tooth on a small screw concealed in the ice cream. He stormed down to Carl's with the bit of steel in one hand and the broken tooth in the other. All the satisfaction he got from Carl was, "Hell, I haf looked upsides down for dat screw, and it gives dot you got him. Ain't I got troubles genug?" Father withdrew his custom from Muckelman's after that.

I can see Father helping my stepmother with the dishes after dinner. Always through eating a few minutes before the rest, he would stand back of you and snatch the plate or cup from you as soon as you had finished with it. Zip, into the dishpan for washing! Sometimes he even lifted the saucer right out from under your raised teacup if you drank your tea too slowly. Clearing the table and drying and putting away the dishes was a sacred ritual with him after each evening meal.

I remember a plain-spoken, plain-dressed lady living at 1211 Washington Street who frequently asked me to run to the store for groceries for her. Contrary to stories of her extreme stinginess, I often received dimes and quarters for going on errands for Hetty Green. With her son and her daughter she occupied a commonplace house near ours, for which she probably paid about thirty-seven dollars a month rent. In her later years she astounded the public by wearing old-style dresses, despite her millions. Mrs. Green's daughter later married Nathan Astor Wilkes, great-grandson of the original John Jacob Astor, who had made his millions in the fur trade.

I remember the winter skating on the Hoboken meadows, to which many New Yorkers were attracted. Even those of Scotch ancestry exercised their skill at curling. At 26 Hudson Street lived Eugene B. Cook, the man who introduced figure skating to America. Until his death about 1910, he frequently thrilled those on the ice with his intricate gyrations. Also an adept chess player, he owned one of the world's most complete chess libraries.

I remember the traveling medicine show that held the crowd until the world-famed Dr. Slocum had expanded on the virtues of "India Sequa" and every gullible person in the assemblage had paid fifty cents for a trial bottle of the panacea.

I remember the fame of Joe Davis, the home-run hitter, who immortalized the "Jersey Blues" in baseball.

I remember Hoboken's reputation as a paradise for the gourmet.

In those days, even though the Irish were in the seats of power, a truly *Deutsch* atmosphere permeated Hoboken. German was spoken as freely as English. Any storekeeper on Washington Street understood the language. Usually behind the swinging doors of saloons on the corners, a German bartender dispensed the beer and pretzels, although the Irish owned public houses in the lower part of the city. One of the most memorable bartenders, Berhard Hoellger, presided at Eighth and Washington streets.

But for unmistakable German atmosphere, one went to the Deutscher Club at Sixth and Hudson streets, number 600 Hudson Street, to be exact, where German poetry and song flowed with the beer. Everybody drank, but temperately. Well-to-do citizens were members, and the prestige involved in belonging to or being invited to join the club placed a stamp of social approval on a person.

In 1893 the Hamburg-American Packet Company was operating four steamers between Hamburg and Hoboken: the *Augusta-Victoria*, the *Columbia*, the *Fürst Bismarck*, and the *Normannia.* Not for the German immigrants were their first-class cabins with plush-padded and gilded interiors, but steerage poured into Hoboken German families who gaped at the splendor of America and then tried to re-create their homeland on the Jersey shore.

Dr. Alfred Charles Kinsey, author of the *Kinsey Report on Sexual Behavior of the Human Female,* was born in Hoboken in 1894. His family later moved to Orange, New Jersey. His father, a shopboy, later became head of the Department of Mechanical Arts at Stevens Institute. The elder Kinsey found lower Hudson Street in the vicinity of Meyer's Hotel and Busch's Hotel a slice of transplanted Europe.

The American element, some years later, built the Columbia Club Building at Bloomfield and Eleventh streets, where dances were held every Saturday night. But you wore evening dress when you visited Duhrkoop's Saloon, nearby on Washington Street.

Whenever a member of the German Schuetzen organizations died, the members of the fraternity would march with the body to Eleventh and Washington streets. A robust German band, decorated with medals and fully uniformed, would lead the procession with Chopin's *Funeral March.*

Shakespeare meant well when he proclaimed about Julius Caesar's day:

When beggars die, no comets are seen;
The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes . . .

But in pre-twentieth century Hoboken, a true *Deutschlander,* no matter how lowly, was given a courtly burial.

The procession halted at Eleventh Street, broke ranks, and re-formed in two files facing one another. Through this alley of friends, the deceased was carried on the way to Flower Hill or another local cemetery. Everybody then dashed into Duhrkoop's Saloon to relieve his thirst.

Four doors below, at Fred Schulkan's place, the lines re-formed after the drums began to beat assembly. The band struck up a livelier tune, *Ich Hatt' einen Kameraden,* and everybody marched downtown again.

CHAPTER III

Hoboken Holocaust

In a few minutes it would be four o'clock, not long to quitting time, when a man could forget the loading of ships and let his sweat dry as he swilled a mug of cool, tangy Hoboken beer in a Hudson Street saloon.

A stevedore licked his lips in anticipation, dropped his handtruck, and ducked low among the cotton bales on Pier 3 to steal a few puffs on a forbidden cigarette. He lighted up, stamped on the match, and relaxed on a convenient bale to inhale the rich smoke. A shrill whistle. Hell, the boss! He tossed the cigarette over the piled bales toward the river and grabbed his handtruck. "Damn the job!" he muttered, as he levered under another bale of cotton. "Always on your tail."

That was how it happened, some say.

That was why some six million dollars' worth of shipping and property went up in smoke.

That was why, according to final uncertain count, 145 lives were lost in Hoboken's worst waterfront disaster.

That Saturday morning of June 30, 1900, the New York *Times* had predicted no letup in the sweltering heat that had descended upon New Jersey and lower New York. A derrick whined in the late afternoon hubbub as it whisked a case of machinery from Pier 2 into the loading hatch of the *Saale* moored to its southern side. A gang foreman shouted orders as the holds of a North German Lloyd freighter and of three of the company's crack ocean liners continued to swallow freight in box, barrel, and bale as they lay moored to their Hoboken piers.

Barrels of iron, cases of machinery, and 1,068 bales of cotton covered southernmost Pier 3, which berthed no vessel. The *Aller* had sailed for Naples from her north side at eleven o'clock that morning.

Upriver, on the south side of Pier 2, laden with cases of hardware, tobacco stems, and over 1,200 bales of cotton, floated the *Saale*. Visitors meandered over her decks. Others were taking leave of their friends below in ornately carved and plush-upholstered staterooms and cabins. She was to sail the next day for Boston to pick up a delegation of Christian Endeavor members bound for their London international conference.

The *Bremen*, with about two hundred people aboard, lay sluggishly on the north side of Pier 2. The great bulk of the pride of the North German Lloyd Line, the *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse*, stretched, majestic and imposing, along the south side of Pier 1. This pier held 2,000 bales of cotton, 225 barrels of cottonseed oil, 5,450 bags of middlings, 4,305 bags of brewers' grain, not to speak of considerable quantities of beef, corn, shoe pegs, tobacco, and household goods. Stevedores were loading the freighter *Main* on the north side of Pier 1.

The heat curled over the empty Scandinavian-American Thingvalla Line Pier north of Pier 1. The *Icelander*, too, had sailed that morning. Nearby, on shore, from the corrugated roofing of the Hoboken Shore Railroad carsheds the sun's white glare struck heat spirals.

Four o'clock. A strong breeze suddenly whipped up, and the dock workers welcomed it with their perspiring faces. They did not see, rising up from the heart of the baled cotton farther out on Pier 3, a feather of white smoke. Blocked from view by piled barrels and cases, the flames licked upward and flashed around the combustible lint.

Precious seconds ticked away. A blast of heat hit plumber Robert Fowler of 112 Jackson Street, Hoboken, as he was fitting a pipe elbow on the deck of the *Saale* on the side facing Pier 3. He ran across the deck, threw himself overboard, and swam to the propeller to hold on until rescuers arrived.

Arthur Zimmerman, ship's carpenter on the *Main,* dropped his plane when he heard the first barrel of cottonseed oil explode. He shouted an alarm to others on deck, tossed his toolbox overboard, and plunged into the Hudson. He floated, clinging to his toolbox, until a launch from the Valentia Clubhouse later picked him up off Pier 1.

Bug-eyed with terror, a stevedore rushed to the loading hatch of the *Saale,* shouting, "Fire!" In the confusion and turmoil of stowing away the freight, few heard him; others thought he was joking. He saved himself by jumping into the water off the stern of the vessel.

Fifteen minutes after four, the fire had swept over an area along the Hoboken waterfront about a quarter of a mile long. Four ocean-going vessels were ablaze. More than twenty small barges and lighters, even some canal boats, were about to become food for the flames. Fifteen hundred people were in peril, and the city of Hoboken was threatened with fiery destruction.

From Pier 3 across the narrow stretch of water the waves of flame had swept into the cabins of the *Saale,* saturated the liner with fire, crossed Pier 2, wrapped the *Bremen* in a cloak of blazing orange-red, leaped to the *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse,* and, sweeping over Pier 1, reached the *Main.*

An alarm brought the Hoboken Fire Department to the conflagration three minutes after its discovery. In fact, the fire had gained such swift headway that the explosions of bursting barrels of cottonseed oil were the first signals to those in the River Street office of the North German Lloyd Line that the docks were ablaze. Chief Applegate stated that the three piers were already beyond saving when his department arrived. He turned the attention of his men to preventing the spread of the fire along the waterfront. Shortly, New York sent fireboats and other available apparatus. According to the National Board of Fire Underwriters' report, the flames had traveled as fast as a man could run.

One hundred and seventy-five visitors rushed ashore from the *Kaiser Wilhelm.* The last man to escape from Pier 1, Eric Sorenson, a seaman on the luxury liner, left her to the mercy of the tugs, *President* and *Sarah E. Easton.* Afire at several points, she was towed into the North River from her moorage, a barge of cotton clinging to her prow. Luckily, the fires started aboard her were soon put out by the fireboats and their crews, and she received the least damage of all four ships.

Like scurrying ants, hundreds of people aboard the *Bremen* scrambled off her onto Pier 2 and escaped before her mooring ropes were burned away.

Screaming, frantic rushing about, hysteria everywhere! Many of those on the burning ships jumped. Despite cries from the fatigued swimmers and the helpless clinging to floating debris and the propeller blades of the doomed liners, several tugboat captains ignored the drowning to salvage floating cotton bales worth about forty dollars each. One captain even began to bargain with victims in the water near the end of Pier 3: "How much will you pay to be taken on board?"

Evidently those trying to keep afloat would not bid high enough.

"Let the greenhorns go down!" one witness later quoted him as shouting.

Another witness asserted that, when a certain tugboat captain had refused to go to the rescue of those struggling in the water, he whined, "What is there in it for me?" Promised a reasonable reward, he refused, "Not unless I get my price!" and ordered his crew to continue salvaging cotton.

Yet for the few inhuman small craft captains, one could count many a hero among those other captains of small craft and their crews who risked their lives to save the drowning and to release the entombed on burning vessels.

At 4:10 P.M., First Officer Herr Schaeffer had ordered the *Saale* cut loose from Pier 2 in the hope that tugs would throw her ropes and tow her out into the river. But both *Bremen* and

Saale drifted with the tide into mid-Hudson, aflame from stem to stern, a menace to river shipping. Men on them yelled for towing ropes from nearby tugs as fire ate into the superstructures of both boats. For some reason the hovering tugs ignored them.

Finding the *Saale* a blazing funeral pyre, Schaeffer, Second Officer Zander, and eight members of the crew could stand by no longer and jumped. They had to swim out into the river to avoid the scorching heat and the shooting flames until the tug *Petty* finally hauled them aboard.

Tugs finally secured the *Bremen* and towed her to the New York side off Desbrosses Street. Portholes belched smoke and fire. A few members of the *Bremen's* crew attempted to lower a lifeboat containing three women. It capsized part way down and tumbled the occupants into the river. They were later picked up by a lighter, and the remaining members of the *Bremen's* crew plunged overboard and swam ashore. The *Bremen* was finally beached on the mud flats on the New Jersey side of the Hudson.

The *Main,* lying at the pier opposite the *Kaiser Wilhelm,* continued to burn at her dock until her hawsers burned away; then tugs pulled her into the river. A solid mass of flames except a section a few feet from the bow, she held, fire-trapped in her hold, over one hundred officers and crew. One witness stated that only Captain Peterman, the paymaster, the fourth stewardess, and the first steward escaped from the *Main.* As she drifted into mid-river, victims tried to clamber out of her portholes, too small for the passage of a human body. When the smoke occasionally cleared, many a limp and lifeless form appeared wedged in these openings.

Three tugs caught the *Saale* a quarter of a mile from the New York side and tried to draw her to midstream. Captain Mirow had evidently, in the act of standing by his vessel, been burned to death. After the fire subsided, a rescue party found near a charred body in the hold of the ship a pearl-handled spring knife and the metal back of a pocket hairbrush which Captain Mirow had had in his possession and which established the identity of the body.

At 5:00 P.M. the tugs held the *Saale* firm off Chambers Street in the North River. Cries and screams, occasional heads at portholes riveted everyone's attention on the floating inferno. About fifty men ran, yelling, from the *Saale's* gangways to her blazing decks, driven by heat and fire like rats from the bowels of the vessel. About half of them jumped and perished in the water because they were too exhausted or injured to keep afloat until help came. The others, either trapped by the fire or rushing madly into the flames in search of escape, disappeared from view. Nearby craft saved from drowning as many as they could reach.

On a strong ebb tide, despite the tugs, the *Saale* drifted toward the Statue of Liberty. At first from passing ferries it seemed as though no one alive remained aboard.

Daniel Casey, Director of Public Safety in Jersey City, published in 1937 in the *Jersey Observer* an account of the fire.

According to Casey's story, however, passengers on a passing ferryboat, the captain of which steered wide of the burning *Saale,* saw a long line of heads and faces thrust from portholes along the sides of the ship. Penned in their cabins by the flames with the ports too narrow to permit escape, these victims frantically waved their arms, screamed in high-pitched voices, and begged for help.

But the rescuers could not do much. All victims ultimately perished, ironically, while aid was but a few feet away. Fire fighters' axes were dulled and blunted on the steel side plates, and firemen smashing at the deck above, when any of them could board the vessel, found that their axe blades hit steel below the wooden deck planking.

The New York fireboat *Robert A. Van Wyck* steamed to the rescue of the *Saale.* Her streaming hoses playing upon the vessel brought cries of hope from the trapped. She drew as close to the burning ship as she safely could. The moans and the cries quieted down as the victims waited in bated suspense for the next gesture of relief. By this time the *Saale* had drifted and settled on the New Jersey flats off Communipaw. She was beached in the mud.

Lowest of all in the rows of ports, the arms of a woman stretched out in mute appeal. Then she thrust out her head as far as possible, white and mute in her terror, an inch or so above the swirling tide.

The river was beginning to rise. Swiftly the ironic significance of that fact struck the crews of the surrounding river craft. Everyone knew that the *Saale*, too deeply imbedded in the mud, would never float the rising tide. As a consequence, water, the enemy of fire, might deal the final fatal blow to those who had survived the flames for so long. The rising tide might pour into the *Saale's* ports and drown every survivor below the high-tide line.

That fear was actually realized. Though all lines of hose were turned on the *Saale*, though a dozen additional tugs and lighters attempted to aid the vessel and poured their complement of water over her steaming plates, the tide continued to rise, and the ship seemingly continued to sink deeper into the water. The stranded liner showed white heat at her forward hull.

Blocked in her efforts to squirm through the port, the woman in the lowest row of ports waved a desperate arm. One of the crew of the *Robert A. Van Wyck*, Captain Thomas F. Conboy, in charge, saw a wedding ring on her finger. Waves splashed into the porthole. Marked for death, she peered up into the men's faces. A lurch of the *Saale* and water inundated the port. The limp hand continued to float gently a few inches under the greenish water.

Necks craned out of portholes. Mouths, grotesquely twisted, screamed with pain and yelled for help. Smoky, gaseous vapor floated their faces in and out of weird, Stygian clouds. The tug *New Yorker* under Captain William C. Brainsted tried in vain to rescue the victims, also.

Someone reached down a hose nozzle from the deck of the lighter *Hustler* to a man at a port. Alternately, smoke and flame whipped past his face, blackening it and scorching it in turns. He was literally burning alive. There were forty-four others in that section with him, including a woman and two children. Evidently he was one of the few still alive because little sound except the roaring and the crackling of fire came from the hold.

He turned the hose inward upon the fire, but he was too weak to play it effectively. It fell from his hands, and the crew drew it back on deck and continued to shower him with water.

A sailor yelled, “What’s your name?”

“Kupfeldt, second cabin steward,” he whispered, and begged for water. The crew handed down a cupful to him.

On the deck of the lighter *Hustler* Father Bowman, pastor of Church of Our Lady of the Rosary, wore under his rubber coat and hood his purple stole and carried the Blessed Sacrament, alert to give extreme unction to any soul having the breath of life in him. But the crew restrained him from certain death when he pleaded that they lower him between the lighter and the burning *Saale* so that he might administer the Host.

Soon the rising tide was pouring into the port from which the head of the second steward still emerged. Smoke poured out while water rushed in, twenty men standing helpless a few feet away. As the *Saale* again lurched and settled deeper into the soft mud of the river mouth, Kupfeldt drowned in the still burning ship.

By this time at Hoboken the Thingvalle Scandinavian-American Line Pier and the Hoboken Shore Railroad Company sheds had gone up in flames. The fire had swept greedily to the Campbell Stores Warehouses, exploding barrels of whiskey and destroying most of the buildings. The endangered Hamburg-American Line piers had been well soaked down and saved.

Many instances of bravery and sacrifice were noted in the course of the fire fighting. The heroism of Captain Frederick Zimmerman and Fireman John McGrevy of Hoboken Fire Company No. 5 is a case in point. As he was directing control of the fire among the Campbell Stores Warehouses, Captain Zimmerman heard shouts from the rear of the structures. He found Chief Michael Dunn and Firemen Michael Kennedy and Michael Hogan trapped by flames and overcome by smoke. Throwing his coat over his head, he rushed in to find the three men unconscious. Fireman John McGrevy joined him in dragging to safety all three victims. Zimmerman, badly burned, was then taken to St. Mary’s Hospital for treatment.

Despite the fact that the Hoboken police had roped a cordon around the fire area, people had slipped out on the Hamburg-American Line piers to view the catastrophe. More than 100,000 men, women, and children watched in horrified suspense from Hudson and River streets and Hudson Square Park, Hoboken. Thousands lined the New York shore from Castle Gardens to the viaduct at 135th Street.

But at 9:30 P.M. the fighters had the fire practically under control, although by 11:45 P.M. only three bodies had been recovered. The holds of the *Bremen* and the *Main* were to burn for days, while the gutted *Saale* smoldered on the mud flats downriver, about sixty bodies entombed below her decks.

By the evening of July 1 over two hundred people had been crowded into the wards of St. Mary's Hospital, Hoboken, and other hospitals in New York and New Jersey. The total dead, first estimated at two hundred to four hundred, dwindled later to 145 with many unaccounted for.

Those dead, however, unknowingly accomplished something. Action did result from this costly experience. Now all piers are of fireproof construction. Furthermore, by order of the United States Government, portholes on all ships built in the yards of this country are large enough to permit the passage of a normal-sized human body.

Fortunately one miracle stands out from this grim background of death and destruction. After the *Main* was beached at Weehawken, at four o'clock on the morning of July 1, nearly twelve hours after the fire had begun, heavy pounding from within her hull indicated to the crew of the fireboat *New Yorker* that some of those imprisoned within the doomed vessel were still alive and trying to break through the side of the ship.

The *New Yorker* poured water over the bow of the vessel to keep the plates in that part of the boat cool. The tug crew considered dynamiting the plates of the vessel, but luckily some of the fire fighters broke through into an empty coal bunker. There, miraculously preserved, huddled sixteen coal passers. They had scurried to a coal bunker in the lower part of the *Main* and stayed there until they felt the motion of the ship.

The heat at times almost suffocated them, and one man, Carl Mehl, blinded by steam, was taken immediately to St. Mary's Hospital, possibly blinded for life. The other firemen were given treatment at Meyer's Hotel, Hoboken, and apparently were none the worse for their experience.

Hoboken celebrated the Fourth of July, 1900, not with a gala parade exulting in the nation's birth, but in solemn mourning. Ninety-four fire victims lying in O'Donnell's Morgue, 235 Washington Street, and in Hoffman's Morgue, 113 Jackson Street, awaited burial. The pastor of St. Matthew's German Lutheran Church, Rev. Alexander Richter, led the service in German, during which Rev. John Rudolph prayed.

Then twelve hearses and six black-draped trucks carried the bodies in a mass funeral procession up First Street to River Street, then Third Street to Hudson Street to the final resting place, Flower Hill Cemetery. Musicians in several Hoboken bands muted their instruments as they played and marched with a long file of mourners. At the graves the Reverend Archdeacon William Jenvey of St. Paul's Protestant Episcopal Church conducted the burial service, his voice ringing out solemnly in the grim silence.

A little shaver visiting with my new mother-to-be, for the first time in my brief life span real tragedy stalked across the stage of my experience. I had seen the flaming ships and been among the helpless, horrified crowds. I had witnessed the destruction of human life by fire and water, the consequences of man's thoughtless neglect. Now in the hush the unspeakable finality of death brooded over my bowed head.

CHAPTER IV

Turn of the Century

In 1901, as I mentioned before, Father married again. The ceremony was performed at the home of the brother of the bride, Margaret Dielman, in a house on Bloomfield Street on November 20. William, Margaret's brother, was in business, manufacturing piano cases. He was, a little later, to face financial ruin. His bookkeeper was to forget to pay the fire insurance premium on the factory. Fire destroyed the building in New York City, and the city came along and condemned the gutted property. The Chelsea Piers were built on the spot, but in 1901 William was happily unaware of his fate.

Bill (thirteen), Bob (six), and I (ten) joined heartily in the festivities, especially in stuffing ourselves with the variety of meats and salads of the wedding supper. My Aunt Lizzie, mothering us at the time, had cautioned us against touching at the table the wine that flowed copiously—and really imported German wine, at that.

When Father and his bride rose to prepare for the wedding journey, the guests left their places promptly to carry out the usual confetti-and-rice ritual and decorate the newlyweds' carriage. My brother Bob and I, curious because we had been forbidden, slipped back to the table, where, with method and, I must say, up to a certain point, with relish, we emptied the dregs of every wineglass on the table.

The wedding party off, Bob and I rolled on the floor of our home around the corner. We were experiencing the first stages of nausea. The rugs went to the cleaners the next day, and two kids almost went to St. Mary's Hospital for stomach-pump treatment. Even today I spurn wine.

My stepmother was to live to the fruitful age of eighty-eight, leaving us in October, 1951. She found in my father a devoted homebody, co-operating good-naturedly in the household chores. After Father's death she took up her home with my family. During the last twenty-two years of her life, bad hearing and poor eyesight bothered her, but she remained a faithful member of St. Paul's Episcopal Church Women's Circle.

Throughout his life Father always seemed to maintain close contact with beverages and humanity. Starting back in 1878 with Sharp and Perkins, he held an office position with them until 1893. Mr. Perkins, about this time, had been our benefactor in paying many of the bills covering my withered leg. He blamed Father for only one fault: Father was too easy with the help. He didn't discharge enough employees in slack periods.

Then followed twenty years' service with G. B. Loweree Company, 84 Front Street, New York, as a compounder or blender of various liquors. Dad left to go into business for himself in 1913.

On his annual two-week vacations, Father generally took the family to the Catskills. One summer when I was six, I became a nature lover on one of these expeditions. I developed a sudden love for four-footed creatures. One furry black-and-white-striped creature that I attempted to catch sprayed me with a full blast of the vilest scent I have ever inhaled. Once back at the farmhouse where the family had put up for the two-week stay, I became anathema to everybody. Mother and Father, cautiously clothespinning their noses between thumb and index finger, dragged me off to the mill pond, stripped me, and scrubbed me red with pine tar soap. They made a quick bonfire of my clothes and returned me to society, purged and swathed in Father's baggy nightgown.

Back to Hoboken. In 1900 the Honorable Lawrence Fagan, mayor, lamented the deplorable condition of Washington Street and recommended a new school building to take care of the overflow of the school population.

At the foot of Eighth Street, Barnum and Bailey's Circus continued to pitch its tents on the old cricket grounds once stretching between Ninth and Eleventh streets, west of Willow Avenue, where, too, lawn tennis had once attracted spectators. The National Lawn Tennis Association, in fact, used to hold its annual tournament there.

Forepaugh's Circus sought higher ground beyond Eleventh Street and also the end of Bloomfield Street.

And Demon Rum took up his abode in 1900 in the city. Charles A. Donovan still occupied the office of chief of police. He reported twenty-eight saloons in Hoboken in which music was played while fifty-nine barmaids served the customers. These resorts catered chiefly to sailors and ships' crews. Beer sold for a nickel a glass. Five licensed concert halls made lots of trouble for the force because many a brawl ensued when one customer horned in on another man's girl friend. Seemingly coy young ladies sang sentimental songs in cracked contralto while the "boys swilled beer." Here, among them in Kissell's at 122 Adams Street and Gantzberg's at 127 Washington Street, one could sit with the entertainers and buy drinks for them. If a customer had sufficient cash, it might even be possible for him to obtain companionship for the entire night.

I recall that when the Palace Hotel at 31 Newark Street burned down on January 29, 1921, the identification of the eleven burned to death proved impossible because most persons registering at the hotel for the night had given fictitious names. They had not wanted it publicized that they were spending the night in female company.

With 270 saloons in Hoboken at the turn of the century, one needed never to die of thirst. Donovan reported 478 cases of drunkenness on the police blotter for 1899-1900, a figure which seems moderate for the opportunities offered for indulgence.

Last fall one of the New York tabloids estimated 1,156 bars in Hudson County—more bars than in any other county in New Jersey. The county receives one out of every six liquor permits issued throughout the state. And in Hoboken there is a bar for every 253 persons. At the time of the report, one block on Hudson Street had nineteen bars in a row. Hoboken totaled over two hundred taverns—a slight decrease from the total reported in 1900.

Luckily, Father was not concerned with consuming liquor; he preferred to dispense it.

As a matter of fact, the sole pastime in the city at this time was not the imbibing of spiritous liquors. The Hoboken Quartette Club, under the presidency of Louis W. Hraba, occupied a large building where about 150 businessmen made the nights mad with harmony. The New Jersey Philatelic Association provided a cultural touch, and the Columbia Club attracted many members. Twenty-three social clubs and political organizations kept the citizens alert and diverted. The Atlantic Boat Club on River Street between Fourth and Fifth streets, and the Castle Point Cyclers Club at 1036 Park Avenue, and the Valencia Rowing Association gathered into their rosters some of the sports enthusiasts, while other vocalizers flocked to the Lyra Singing Society at 107 Washington Street. Significantly with the growth of city life and the fragmentation of the community, we have very little mass singing today. Actually, there are too few songs, except the old numbers, that one can sing in a group. We are growing too large as a community, as a nation, to sing together.

The second spectacular fire in my boyhood occurred on August 7, 1905, shortly after eleven at night. In 1903 the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western Railroad had become owners of the Hoboken ferry service, including the Fourteenth Street branch opened in 1886. The D., L. & W. Railroad Terminal, the ferry house, and two ferryboats—*Hopatcong* and *Binghamton*—

went up in a blaze of flame and clouds of smoke. The famed Duke's House nearby and adjacent coal pockets caught fire and added to the difficulty Jersey City fire engines, New York fireboats, and local fire fighters had in putting out the inferno. From the attic of a house on Hudson Street, to which Father had rushed me, I reveled to my heart's content at the sight of the fire as the local police kept the surging citizenry behind the ropes.

During these adolescent years, the boyhood friends with whom I shared escapades were many.

There were Happy Miller and Bill Miller, brothers, who eventually got jobs in the shipyards.

Looper Edward Schoenfeld later went into business with his father. But bankruptcy forced them to lose their factory—in fact, everything. He later studied to become an electrician, and for the past twenty years has been boss electrician on the Maritime Commission piers here in Hoboken.

Larry Ryan was to become a police officer in a little town in south Jersey. Jack McLaughlin graduated into the brokerage business. Nobby Royal Bunt, in time, was to hold a concession with the New York Central Railroad in their Binghamton station. He ran the restaurant and had his vendors sell milk, soda, sandwiches, and magazines on the trains between stops.

Many a daring exploit was conceived in their company. While I am still alive to tell it, here's one of them:

Once when I was playing ball with some of these boys, Nobby Bunt popped a fly through a window in Mrs. O'Hearn's house on the corner of Twelfth and Hudson streets. The team vanished into thin air. But the alert "cop," sighting yours truly limping for cover, chased and captured me. Off to the station house the officer assisted me.

"A foin catch you made, my lad!" exclaimed the desk lieutenant to the embarrassed policeman.

"But the kid broke a window, Lieutenant!"

"I don't care if he broke a bank. Look at his leg! He couldn't even get a head start." Then, with true Irish good nature, he waved me off. "Go home, me boy! No complaint!"

I stumped gratefully home. Later I learned that the men at the station house had chipped in $1.20 to cover the damage and had paid for the new window.

Another incident comes to mind. In the spring of 1909 Charles Lissenden and I boarded a fishing boat and set out for the banks off Sandy Hook for a day's catch. About one hundred feet distant another fishing boat rose and fell with the waves. Suddenly we saw one of their men cast his line somewhat too energetically and throw himself overboard with it. I jumped in and held him up in the choppy sea until they could throw us a life preserver, put it around the man, and saw him hauled back aboard his own boat. The next day Charley brought me a little clipping from the New York *Journal* on the episode: a man's life had been saved by an unknown fisherman.

The year 1910 saw, for Hoboken, three important happenings: the Hudson Tunnels to Thirty-third Street opened; James Gallagher shot Mayor William J. Gaynor of New York City on August 9 on board the *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse* as Gaynor was about to sail from Hoboken for Europe; George Gonzales, the last Republican mayor of the city, was elected. For me it brought a twenty-first birthday.

I became a man, just like that. Girls entered the picture. Naturally, with my unreliable leg, I couldn't very well develop into a Fred Astaire; yet, as I grew older, my chums would try to drag me along to dances. In time I developed into a male wallflower.

In a sense my inability to dance hampered my relationships with the other sex, but I never let my handicap "get me down." There were always plenty of girls ranged along the wall with me who, either because of poor dancing ability or because they hadn't been asked to dance, would join me in light conversation. Since we went out in groups, I always had my partner on a party, and my kidding often kept my lady's mind off my bad leg.

The first decade of the new century found Hoboken highly churched: three Baptist, six Evangelical Lutheran, four Methodist, six Roman Catholic, two Protestant Episcopal, three Presbyterian churches, and one Jewish synagogue. Although I preferred the Protestant Episcopal Church, my buddies were of all denominations and persuasions, and seldom did religious differences mar our companionship.

As a matter of fact, one of my indulgences in those formative years was not a very churchly pastime: crap. My pals were addicted to the same pastime. But there was one chap, Jerry Naylor by name, who simply had too much luck. If you had an errant dime on your person, Jerry could charm those dice so hypnotizingly that, before you knew it, you and the dime had parted company. Jerry Naylor had a system. In short, he "cleaned us out" whenever we played with him. Hence, the plot. We decided to pool our money, match his bets, and overplay him. One of our gang, the best dice charmer among us, would be detailed to play for us. If he won, he was to "blow the works" on a good time.

To be brief, I was elected. Did I sweat? Jerry played deftly and profitably, but I'd always come back. Soon Jerry began to wilt, and my pile of greenbacks grew larger. We called it quits after I had won $360. The community of North Bergen reechoed all night to our jollity as we splurged the whole amount on food and drink. Our girl friends helped us get rid of the winnings.

In 1911 Bob, my youngest brother, won his first medal for swimming in the ninety-pound class, placing first in the Hudson County Park Commission Competition. In 1912 he repeated the feat in the one-hundred-pound class. Bob later distinguished himself as a swimmer, placing first in September, 1914, in the mile event and holding the Hudson County Championship. He joined the United States Volunteer Life Savers Organization. Water was our medium.

With 1911 Hoboken boasted nine elementary schools and a high school, plus four parochial schools, founded from 1860 to 1904. The Board of Education located its offices in School No. 4 on Park Avenue near Sixth Street.

In his annual message of 1912 Mayor Martin Cooke recommended the drafting of a new city charter by a specially appointed charter commission. "How about sewerage facilities for the northwestern section of the city?" he asked. "And why not greater encouragement to industry to settle in Hoboken?"

He congratulated the city upon its sound financial condition, the erection of a new high-school building, and the current construction of a new School No. 1 building. "Less crime is committed in Hoboken than in any other city in the state of the same population," he maintained, with a gesture toward statistics.

But Old Man Devil was giving the Police Department a run for their money. Cooke, in 1914, expressed the hint that cellar restaurants, cabarets, and dance halls were sources of trouble.

But, as old David Harum used to say, "Fleas is what keeps a dog from worryin' about being a dog!"

CHAPTER V

Back to the Indians

Even the Indians back in the seventeenth century liked their dash of firewater. Undoubtedly there were moments among the Delawares (also called Lenapes or Minsis) on the west bank and among the Manathanes on the east bank when a leather-skinned chieftain would shake his wampum irately and bawl the devil out of his tribe for overindulgence in rum.

Shortly after Hudson began exploring the river to which history has given his name, one of the first boatloads of whites disembarked on the eastern shore to parley with their Indian brothers. There ensued a general drinking bout, not unlike a Russian banquet to the heads of the United States Military Mission to the USSR in 1943.

Many an Indian hangover prompted the name "Manhattan," meaning "island, or place of general intoxication." Don't blame me for the lack of agreement in meaning on the part of the synonyms, for that's what the book says.

Hackenwelder, early missionary for many years among the Delawares, believes that since Hoboken, when the Hoboken kill was in flood, appeared an island, the carousal may have actually taken place on the western shore at what is now the mile-square city.

Too, Robert Juet, Hendrick Hudson's first mate, recorded in his logbook in 1609, as the *Half Moon* or one of its sister ships sailed down the river to its mouth for the third time, a description of the "mannahatta" shore line very much like that of Hoboken's primitive site. The fact leads the puzzled historian to wonder whether "Manhattan" was originally the name of the west shore or the east shore.

But what's in a name? The bluff Juet saw, "of the color of a white green, as though it were either copper or silver myne," suggests the Hoboken bluff because, according to geologists, this particularly colored stone in a rock formation appears nowhere else on the western shore of the Hudson.

This special stone the Indians used in the making of their tobacco pipes. Possibly the name "Hoboken" derives from the Indian word for this pipestone. Some maintain that the site was named after a Dutch village on the Sheld River. And a few malicious gossips would extract the place name from the Indian word for "crooked" and hastily ascribe it to our shore line.

Anyhow, the Indian owners, Arrowmeauw Tekwappo and Sackwomeck (sounds like a patent medicine concern, but, honestly, I'm not kidding you!), on July 12, 1630, deeded over to the Director and Council of New Netherlands an extensive tract of land called Hopoghan Hackingh. Although I have no evidence, you can just bet there was a keg of rum thrown in on the deal.

The Dutch purchasers represented Michael Pauw, Burgomaster of Amsterdam and one of the earliest directors of the Dutch West India Company. Ever since, Jersey Cityites have been blessed with Pavonia Avenue, inasmuch as Pavonia, named after Pauw, was part of the original tract.

You can't beat the Dutch! Already yet in 1629 had been encouraging the settlement of patroons in the New World, these States-General of United Netherlands. Members of the Dutch West India Company received special privileges: they could plant colonies; possess and hold under full title, provided they satisfied the Indians (more rum!), four leagues of shore front on the side of any navigable stream not already taken up or one half that distance on both sides with the country extending in the rear as far as the occupiers would permit. In short, they could grab as much land as they could get away with.

And some did grab. But they overlooked three things (Washington Irving, notwithstanding): hard work, Indians, and mosquitoes.

Because Pauw did not fulfil the conditions of his original pact, his land reverted back to the Dutch West India Company. But his agent, Hendrick Cornelissen Van Vorst, on January 1, 1640, arranged a twenty-year lease of Hopoghan Hackingh. Director Wilhelms Kieft, whom Washington Irving in his *Knickerbocker's History of New York* made the satirical counterpart of Thomas Jefferson for his many ineffectual proclamations, arranged the deal.

Actually, the first white settler in Hoboken, Van Vorst didn't really live on the west shore—simply tilled his "bowerie" there. Whether he grew weary with crossing and recrossing the river to New Amsterdam, whether the Indians waited until harvest time to steal his corn, or whether nature combined mosquitoes, rabbits, and deer against him, we don't know. He soon abandoned his farm to return to Holland.

Then along came Mynheer Aert Teunissen Van Putten, who leased the tract for ten years on January 1, 1641, and erected the first dwelling on the "island," plus a brew house. From the beginning his name was against him. In 1643 poor Van was the victim of a sporadic Indian raid. He lost his livestock, his property, and his life, but the Indians spared the brewery. Frau Van Putten, somewhat more circumspect, escaped across the river with her capacious frame, which she later bestowed in marriage upon a Manhattan carpenter named Sybout Claessen. In 1645 she and Sy laid claim to Hoboken, but Kieft, the New Amsterdam governor, turned it down.

The Van Putten murder had roused Kieft to retaliation. This time it was no gesture. The Director-General empowered a contingent of Dutchmen, resentful of Indian attacks, to seek revenge. They massacred a number of Indians, their women and children, on February 24, 1643, near the farm of Jan Evertsoon. Then, for two years until the treaty of peace in 1645, war flamed up between Indian and white man with the usual exchange of scalps for bullets.

Innocent Dierck Claessen, lessee from Bremen in 1646, let discretion take the better part of valor. He cleared out when the Indians began to appraise his bushy black hair. Followed scattered Dutch settlement in Hoboken and ten years of comparative tranquility. But again on September 16, 1655, the "savages" broke the truce by massacring the Dutch settled there. Michael Jansen's family alone escaped the slaughter.

Nevertheless, a year later, thanks to Dutch persistency, Nicholas Varleth occupied Hoboken.

Just why Hoboken was resold is not clear, but in 1658 the Dutch dictator, Peter Stuyvesant, clinched a profitable bargain with the Indians. They deeded him all the land in the country between the Hackensack and Hudson rivers, including Weehawken, Hoboken, Jersey City, and Bayonne. The price: eighty fathoms of wampum, twenty fathoms of cloth, twelve kettles, six guns, two blankets, one double kettle, and one half barrel of beer. Perhaps Stuyvesant wanted to console the Indians for an original "steal." Maybe the Indians since Arrowmeauw Tekwappo and Sackwomeck had developed a shrewder business sense. Certainly they had been fairly tolerant of the usurping Europeans in the early 1600's. For a few knives and trinkets, a little wampum, some rum, and a gun or two, with a blanket by way of afterthought, they had and still were bartering away what today constitutes some of the most valuable real estate in the country.

By patent, in 1660 the village of Gamoenapau became Bergen, and the first regularly constituted court of justice in New Jersey was appointed by the Director-General of New Amsterdam, the Hoboken escapee, Michael Jansen, being one of the three magistrates.

Ultimately, on February 5, 1663, Nicholas Varleth found in his lap a patent for Hoboken, arranged for and signed by Peter Stuyvesant, covering 276 acres. Varleth, whether out of gratitude or foresight, married Anna, the sister of Peter Stuyvesant and the widow of Samuel Bayard. Upon their father's death, Varleth's daughters inherited the Hoboken tract, and, in turn, Mrs. Hickman, the married daughter of one, became the sole legatee. She and her husband sold the estate to a later Samuel Bayard, New York merchant, actually one of the family, for five hundred pounds on June 19, 1711.

To Hoboken the Bayards would retire during the summer. First his son Stephen, then his grandson William, became the proprietors. They began to cultivate the property. In 1753 what is now Castle Point, agriculturally developed, contained an apple orchard capable of producing an annual eighty barrels of cider. About a thousand young fruit trees graced the promontory. Fishermen told tall stories about the shad in the river near the cove and gathered oysters in the shallows.

A prosperous member of the mercantile house of William Bayard and Company and a member of the Committee of Fifty, William Bayard lived at Hoboken when the American Revolution threatened. His country home received as guests the Massachusetts delegates to the Continental Congress in 1775. Even Quincy Adams had written in his journal under date of May 12, 1773: "Spent the morning in writing and roving, and dined with Col. William Bayard at his seat on the North River."

But as the British seemed to be gaining the upper hand, Bayard had a change of heart. He re-evaluated his American sympathies in terms of commercial advantage. Financial ruin awaited him, were he to espouse openly the American cause. After the capture of New York by the redcoats and the Tories in 1776, he rejected the idea of heroic sacrifice and became a turncoat and zealous loyalist by joining King George's army on May 1, 1777.

The American patriots did not take his defection very kindly. In 1778 "Light Horse Harry" Lee carried off most of Bayard's cattle. A band of Americans, striking again, burned down his Hoebuck mansion on August 24, 1780.

At the close of the Revolution, William Bayard, his lands confiscated, betook himself to his country seat, Greenwich House, Southampton, England, to die in comfort.

Tom Paine had a somewhat harder time.

CHAPTER VI

That Old Gang of Mine

Just about this time, 1909, I began my war for independence—economic independence.

I landed my first real position as clerk for J. K. Wheeler, then at 290 Broadway, New York, an underwriter who switched without warning one day to the manufacture of match-vending machines. J. K. Wheeler ultimately discovered that, since every tobacco dealer gave away free matches with each purchase, no one saw the point in buying what he got for nothing.

Yet J. K. was a stubborn idealist. He just knew that match-vending machines would sweep the country. One Sunday he called me in to help with some paper work. At noon he handed me a dollar and told me to buy my dinner. When I returned, he was missing, and, to this day, still is. He departed, owing me four weeks' salary, a staggering thirty-two dollars. I became a wiser man.

But fate had marked me. I found employment next in what we know today as a "bucket shop." To me, it was a brokerage firm. Through the mails the outfit reluctantly advertised that it could be persuaded to develop land next to the Trinity Copper Mines out West.

The three partners finally cornered a good thing. To thirty thousand names, circular letters and pamphlets went out. A bonanza awaited him who prudently invested in the development of lands adjacent to the bona fide Trinity Copper Mines. The circular with its promise of imminent wealth summoned all to get in on the ground floor. We four clerks were kept busy mailing the harbingers of fortune. Actually, the vacant land was nowhere near the legitimate mines mentioned.

After five weeks of circularizing, sufficient replies with enclosures had piled in to account for $35,000, collected from gullible investors who had purchased worthless stock.

One morning I went to the office to find the bosses missing and the local police in charge. The big boys had absconded with the cash. Three thousand people had subscribed, most of them itemized on the "sucker's list" of thirty thousand names I had purchased the week before on orders from my bosses. We had paid two hundred dollars to the Ann Street Agency for the list.

There comes a time in a man's life when he begins to wonder whether it pays to do a job well. That time came to me in 1912 after, in the years before the First World War, I lined myself up with the National Express at the West Shore Terminal in Weehawken. One bright morning when tremors of ambition were oscillating up my spine and I had my inner eye on a substantial increase in my fifteen dollars a week, the master of transportation directed me to take a load of trucks to the Duane Street, New York, office.

Alert to his slightest whim, I began loading the handtrucks on my wagon. I paused at the rear of the loaded wagon and gazed with pride upon the high-piled result of my brawn and expedition.

"Say, you! Come here!" I jumped to attention. The boss glowered at me. He must have crept up behind me on hands and knees to take me by surprise. "What you got loaded on that wagon?"

"T-t-trucks," I stuttered.

"Trucks? You fool! I said 'trunks,' not 'trucks'! Get the hell out of here! You're fired!"

In a daze I went to my locker, donned my street clothes, and picked up my meager earnings from the paymaster. I could have sworn that the man had said "trucks."

That night someone rang our bell. Bob admitted a gentleman who looked familiar. I recognized him as assistant to the master of transportation.

"Hello, young man. Sorry to break in on you like this, but I had to see you before you visited a doctor about your bad hearing. I've been sent to tell you that the boss did say 'trucks' this morning."

"Then, gosh, why did he fire me?"

"It's a long story, Mr. Field, but we had to take this means of placing a detective on the wagon you have been handling with the suspect. You see, somebody's been stealing express packages, and we think it's the man working with you on that wagon."

While the police were busy solving the case, the company paid me for resting at home. Finally, the case broke. Jake and Andy, New York cops; Larry, the fireman; Oscar, the driver of my truck, and two dames on Canal Street on the receiving end for the stolen packages were members of the ring. Their conviction followed.

Meanwhile, I got my old job back.

Sometimes, we were put in charge of the "money" wagon, a sort of pioneer Brinks service. An old fellow named Josef (I never knew his last name) drove the vehicle; I was guard. We would pick up the Montreal messenger, a chap called Meyer, at the West Shore Terminal along with the small money safes and kegs of gold. All three of us, carrying revolvers strapped conspicuously on our hips, used to drive from the Forty-second Street Ferry all the way down West Street to Cortlandt. We never had a bit of trouble, not that there were fewer holdups in those days. It was just our luck. Nevertheless, none of us wanted a trial of our marksmanship, because none of us had ever before shot a revolver.

On one occasion the livery stable gave me a "green" team with which to make deliveries. While I was waiting with the horses well in hand before 200 Broadway, New York City, a passing motorist blew his horn and so startled the horses that they shied up onto the sidewalk and knocked down none other than Assistant District Attorney Rand of New York.

I quieted the team and hurried over to him, already up on his feet brushing himself off. He assured me and a police officer that he was none the worse for the experience and would make no charge against anyone. He told us to forget the incident, that he was on his way to lunch with our general superintendent, Mr. Smith.

During the luncheon he evidently told Mr. Smith of the accident, for that afternoon I and my two helpers were fired. Just as suddenly, two days later, we were all rehired.

Some weeks after the event, Mr. Rand recognized me when I was delivering a package. "You're the one that had the balky team, aren't you? You know, I suspected that Smith might fire you after I very imprudently told him about the accident. So I got right on the job and had you fellows reinstated immediately."

Here was a public officer with a generous heart.

After studying shorthand and typing, I clerked from 1913 to 1917 in the Examining Department of the Lawyers Title and Trust Company, 160 Broadway, New York City.

The superintendent of the building in which the firm had offices often lunched with me. Mr. John Nee, affable, neat, and personable, was just a little too polished in one respect: his head was as bald as the dome of the Taj Mahal. Each Christmas brought to him from the occupants of our building a deluge of hair restorers, tonics, hairbrushes, hair stimulators, and hair nets in order that he might persist in aiding nature in replenishing his hair.

One of my co-workers, Andrew J——, was afflicted with the same name as the general manager of the firm. Confusion and embarrassment piled up as they continued to intercept, accidentally, each other's telephone calls. Finally when Andrew the greater got a tongue-lashing from a distraught female who accused him of fathering her unwanted child, the general manager called Andrew the lesser up on the carpet.

The conversation went somewhat like this:

"Boy, do you want to stay on in our employ?"

"Why, of course, sir. But . . ."

"Then you got to change that name of yours. One Andrew J—— is enough around here, and I'm going to be it. In fact, I did get here first, you know."

"But it's my name, too. What'll I call myself, sir?"

"I could make many a pertinent suggestion, my boy, but I shall not be rude. As long as you change your name, I don't give a picayune damn what you call yourself!"

"Well, I . . ."

"Here. How about this woman you got in trouble? Marry her, and take her last name."

"How did you learn about . . ."

"Listen, boy! This is getting too big for me! In a few days they'll be passing on my check to you! Never mind the details. Marry the girl. Take her name. I'll help you with the courts. This is it: you get one month, or else!"

And thus did General Manager J—— save a woman from the finger of shame, preserve his own identity, and rename his namesake with a long Polish name.

Memories of these years cannot be separated from such names as Matty McGuire, John Foster, Bill Thompson, Tony Amoruso, Frank Hayes, Frank Straub, Buck Burtis, Radiators Stehlik, Superman Sheridan, Jerry Taylor, Doc Laws, Al Knight, Hank Colson, Harry Baker, Sam Spasaro, Mike Carney, George Basler, and Buster Finkeldie.

Bill Thompson, recently retired Hoboken fireman, was the semiprofessional pitcher for the Riverside Baseball Club, to which I belonged for twelve years.

Tony Amoruso developed into one of the most skillful shoemakers in Hoboken. You could not help but like him.

A prankster of the first grade, Buck Bill Burtis has now retired after a lucrative career as a salesman of super-stick Band Aids for Johnson and Johnson, the manufacturers.

Harry Baker made an absent-minded pastime a lifelong occupation. He used to juggle small stones as he talked to you. Like doodling, it took care of his nervous energy, he said. In time he became one of the foremost jugglers in the world, starring with the two Johnsons in the famous Johnson, Baker, and Johnson juggling act. A star in his own right, Baker later presented his own act.

Frank Hayes later worked for the United States Treasury Department.

Frank Straub specialized in the making of women's pocketbooks and incidentally filled his own with a substantial annual income from their manufacture.

Had he let nature have her way, Doc Laws would have been an actor. I recall that he was once introduced to a girl to whom he tried to pass himself off as a doctor of surgery, but the young lady he attempted to fool proved to be a trained nurse. She soon tangled him up in his own sutures. Doc Laws built up his own electrical contractor's business locally.

He once had the ironic experience of getting into an elevator that was not there. One day, while a salesman in a fixtures store was showing Doc some lamps he was looking over for a customer, the proprietor invited him down to the basement to inspect some new models. He ushered Doc into the elevator shaft, and Doc reached the basement and finally the hospital. Badly injured, he brought suit against the firm for fifty thousand dollars and sent the company into bankruptcy.

Hank Colson used to work for the National City Bank, while Radiators Stehlik entered the sales game in an attempt to sell radiators for a fixtures firm. Somehow or other, he could not seem to warm up to his subject; success eluded him. He began selling groceries.

Al Knight, very manual-minded, became quite a craftsman.

John Foster was never out of work before the depression. A clever designer, he got an assignment making designs for shirts. He eventually became a member of Bud Fisher's cartooning staff. Fisher was the creator of the comic strip *Mutt and Jeff*. In later years Foster was associated with the Keith-Albee-Orpheum enterprises.

Bob "Superman" Sheridan's appearance belied his name. You would hardly expect any sky-flying or manifestation of the miraculous from "Superman" Sheridan. Nevertheless, he was—and still is—a little fellow with a big heart, and perhaps it was because of that magnanimity that we dubbed him with his nickname back in the barbershop-quartet days.

Moreover, Bob has never been able to get out of his nature his interest in "kids" and their ways. A recent issue of the New York *Sunday News* termed him "a youngster of 58, Hoboken's Marbles King," because Bob Sheridan, for the past eighteen years recreation assistant to the staff of the Hoboken Department of Parks, has set for himself the task of promoting marbles champions.

When we were young men about town, Bob started out with the idea of building up a grocery and provisions business. At the time food was included in a tugman's wage agreement; he made a specialty of contracting with tugboat owners to serve their crews three meals a day. Later union revisions eliminated that setup. Furthermore, a bad spell of rheumatism, probably resulting from frequent trips in and out of the store refrigerator, forced Bob to sell his business. Thereupon, he resumed his interest in recreation through the position with the Department of Parks.

Annually Bob conducts elimination contests for a Hoboken representative to compete in the state marbles championship matches. He has given away, he claims, about 50,000 marbles to interest boys and girls in "mibs," as we used to call the game of marbles. Under Bob's sponsorship Joseph Napolitano, the mile-square city's champion, took second place in the statewide marbles tournament at Wildwood, New Jersey, in 1954.

With a wife, Elizabeth, and four children at 1038 Garden Street, Hoboken, Bob still finds time to play pal to any youngster who wants pointers on perfecting his marbles technique or on dressing for his first movie date with the girl across the street.

Another recollection rooted in my mind is Sam Spasaro's passion for playing pinochle; in fact, he would play any kind of card game. He'd shake hands with you with one hand and with the other pull a deck of cards out of his pocket. Now retired, Sam spends most of his time in Miami, Florida, probably playing the pasteboards.

Then there was our neighborhood "cop," Police Sergeant "Buster" Finkeldie. As the limb of the law, he struck awe in our hearts, but a word from him or a friendly pat on the back raised a fellow's ego sky-high. The fellows used to follow him around just to hear him whistle—and, believe me, that man could whistle! Name the bird, and he'd whistle its call. One of the strange anomalies in human relations seems, to my mind, the fact that this expert whistler was content merely to be a policeman rather than entertain audiences throughout the country with his gift. Yet the comradely hand and the pert whistle of "Buster" kept many a Hoboken boy in touch with the wholesome things of life. And when we needed talent for a political rally or a community social event, we could always call on "Buster" to whistle a few songs.

Another crony, Mike Carney, as a matter of record, was the man responsible for recommending me in 1918 for civic employment. I will always cherish his kindness. He was then working for Hudson County on the Hudson County Boulevard as a foreman. He later became inspector of the Hudson County Boulevard. Many a laugh has Mike provided for the boys.

One year Mike Carney, I, and two other friends secured tickets to the New York Police Department games at Sheepshead Bay. Upon admission, we found that no seats were available. Mike, then boulevard inspector, took command of the situation. He added another two inches to his chest expansion and tapped a lieutenant on the back. Flashing his badge, he blandly inquired whether the good man would find a few choice seats for the mayor's aide of Hoboken and his party of three.

Quite deferentially, the lieutenant passed us on to an Inspector Coughlan, who very graciously ushered us up onto the special stand for Mayor Hylan and his party. Coughlan introduced Mike to Mayor Hylan as a mayor's aide of Hoboken, and the New York City mayor made us welcome.

After the games Mayor Hylan invited "Mayor" Carney and us three to join him and his party over pigs' knuckles and sauerkraut. Can you imagine any Hobokenite refusing that favored dish? Yet we considered it the prudent thing to take our leave while we were still close to Hylan's heart. Had we by chance revealed our true colors, he would have had us carried back to Hoboken in the "pie wagon."

We frequently spent weekends at Carney's summer cottage at Califon, New Jersey. After one or two trips we became acquainted with the superintendent of one of the local Sunday schools. On a certain Saturday evening the boys, after a few drinks, were attempting a little harmony. I am proud to state that I tried to carry the first tenor.

Our Sunday-school superintendent, on his porch a block down the street, was so enthralled by our rendition of "There Is a Tavern in the Town" that he walked up to the house to invite us to perform the next morning in Sunday school. I don't know whether we were singing for our own souls when we rendered "Rescue the Perishing" to an appreciative audience the following day at 10 A.M. I do know we gave the Sunday-school teacher, a Miss Huckleberry, a rough time with our ignorance of Biblical history, although we did do penance by contributing to the largest collection in the Sunday school's history.

The boys and Mike used to frequent a certain tavern. Mike was above the regular bar whiskey. He liked the strong stuff with quality, called "private stock." For this gratification of his discriminating taste he paid five cents extra.

One day we found Charley Ohlbig, the proprietor, a bit under the weather as we stepped up for the usual. Charley had reached the stage at which he would have mixed Westphal's Auxiliator with a double gin and enjoyed it. Patsy, the bootblack, helped him upstairs to his apartment.

When Patsy returned, he took a demijohn from underneath the bar and started to fill the bar bottles and private stock bottles from the same demijohn. Mike watched the procedure with a cocked eye.

"And, sure, Pat, what are ye doin'? It's common liquor you're pourin' into me private stock bottle!"

Patsy shrugged his shoulders. “It’s all the same stuff, Mr. Carney. We give ’em the label they call for.”

Charley Ohlbig, to square himself with Mike, sent to the next Riverside Club New Year’s Eve party three bottles of bourbon, three bottles of Scotch, six bottles of port, and six bottles of sherry.

Another amusing incident involved my pal George Basler, for a number of years now engaged in the provisions business, and me. We underwent the Great Purge long before the Communists ever heard of one. George was keeping company at the time with Bertha Weiler, whose mother had remarried a Mr. Wilkins, industrious agent in America for a German beverage known as Borash.

Well, in the course of human events, George and I were invited to the Wilkinses’ wedding anniversary. As a courtesy gesture and perhaps with an eye to promoting the product, the caterer had served each guest with a small glass of Borash. I naively assumed that the drink was some sort of German substitute for vodka. Of course, the couple was toasted, I saluting them by emptying my glass of Borash. The girls on either side of me merely sipped theirs, but the stuff went smoothly down, and I requested a refill. The girls began to giggle. Several times thereafter we offered further “Prosit” and “Saluta,” each time I making it a point to drink bottoms up. Mr. Wilkins observed me with a scientific eye which grew a bit troubled after my ninth glass.

Later that evening George got me into a corner and whispered in my ear, “You fool! You know what that Borash is? That’s not liquor! It’s a laxative! It assists the digestive tract! And what an assist you’ve got yourself!”

A few days later I was willing to sell my personal testimonial to Mr. Wilkins as to the virtues of his foreign concoction.

CHAPTER VII

The Yanks Are Coming

The thunder of World War I began to reverberate against American shores. On September 26, 1915, the Steneck Trust at 95 River Street announced its agency for the Third German War Loan. Because English sympathizers had been purchasing British war bonds, many of the Hoboken Germans considered themselves justified in withdrawing their savings and investing in German war bonds.

As we look back now, they had every right to support any participating country, since the United States was neutral at the time. However, after we had entered the war in 1917 and propaganda had whipped up tremendous hysteria against the Entente, these investors in German loans had to do a sudden about-face.

In November, 1916, the local authorities became alarmed because the D., L. & W. Railroad was carrying explosives to the Hoboken boundary line for shipment to Europe. The Black Tom disaster had conditioned every municipality along the waterfront to be on the alert for spy activity, especially the danger to a community if stockpiles of munitions were to explode "accidentally."

The year 1917 brought somber days for Hoboken. When the United States entered the war, the city became the military capital of the country, the port of embarkation for the American Expeditionary Forces. As such, its economy and its pattern of living were completely disrupted by the rigid orders of federal military discipline. One day even the mayor and the commissioners found the City Hall under armed guard because of a rumor about spy activity. Even the mayor underwent interrogation.

I saw marching men, soldier-laden troopships, wives and sweethearts bidding tearful farewells. I witnessed the frantic efforts of a hyphenated American population to wave the country's flag and the paralyzing effect of wartime restrictions on the city's economy.

Seized by war writ in 1917, the piers on River Street between First and Fifth streets have, up to 1953, been in the possession of the United States Government. In 1917 a half mile north to Eleventh Street and west to Willow Avenue, the authorities declared the military zone a restricted area for Army and Navy personnel. Three dry zone orders closed nearly all the saloons in the city. Those who defied the ban suffered federal prosecution, while a few bartenders ironically attempted to sell soft drinks and milk. Even St. Mary's Hospital fell under government control.

The tavern keeper with German background was caught between two millstones. He was faced with financial ruin in the closing down of his saloon and the zoning of his property in a restricted area. Too, he was in danger of mob violence if he protested because someone's misguided patriotism might lead him to ascribe the tavern keeper's every word and action to pro-German sentiment. In these years a certain element throughout the country took extreme sadistic pleasure in harassing the German-bred populace. Yet hyphenated Americanism on the part of the Irish passed without comment. You will recall that, after the Sinn Fein Rebellion, the Irish were attempting to establish themselves independently of England and were not particularly assisting in the war effort.

On April 12, 1917, reporters declared that the menus of city hostelries no longer listed the German dishes still being served.

Instead, strange Americanized names had been substituted, and one probably had to ask the waiter in a whisper to name the ingredients of the unknown dish. Sauerkraut, for instance, became "liberty cabbage."

The *Hudson Observer*, on April 17, objected on its editorial page to a group of "funny" cartoons recently published in the New York *Evening Telegram*: "It is just such libelous attacks that make the name of Hoboken the 'butt' of many jokes in vaudeville houses throughout the country."

To vindicate itself, about a third of the population of the city turned out in May to participate in the Memorial Day parade. With oratorical sweep, the local paper issued the challenge: "Let all flippant tongues hereafter cease impugning the name of the mile-square city and bear in mind that it is thoroughly and absolutely American and that its citizens, irrespective of birthplace or descent, are thoroughly and absolutely American."

In August one woman haled before a police judge a fourteen-year-old boy who had called her son "Dutch."

Employed by the government in the early months of the war in the Personnel Division as a payroll clerk, I occasionally checked identification badges on the piers and kept records of the hours the men on the piers worked. Every person that entered government property had to have on his identification badge a small photograph of himself. When I performed the badge-checking, I was always flanked by a soldier on either side.

Although most of the stevedores were reliable, a few ran double payrolls. Any longshoreman who volunteered to load ammunition "down the bay" received double the regular rate. Frequently I checked pay slips that called for wages of over five hundred dollars made in one week.

In time the war dead reached the port. At first, because the casualties were so numerous, there were too many bodies for the few caskets available. I recall that some of the first transports unloaded the dead in sacks. In short time, however, the dead began to arrive in sealed coffins. No uncommon sight was it for us to find the entire length of the upper story of the pier covered with caskets containing the bodies of Americans who had made the "supreme sacrifice."

Later after I had been employed by the city and worked at the City Hall, I would frequently glance out of the window on the First Street side upon a line of embarking men stretching from Harrison Street up First Street, passing the City Hall located between Bloomfield and Washington streets, to the Army piers. The *Leviathan* docked regularly at Hoboken.

In December, Postmaster Adolph Lankering, after a brief absence from his office, faced, upon his return, the rumor that he had been interned for pro-German activities. This was news to the postmaster.

In 1918 the super-duper Americans worked anti-German sentiment up to a fever pitch.

In April even the New Jersey Masons barred the German tongue in their lodge rituals.

An indignant letter writer to the Hoboken *Observer* stated that in Elysian Park, seated between two women on one side and an old man and a girl on the other, he was "suddenly startled by the guttural sounds of the German language floating through the air, coming from both sides of me. The language of the Hun! To have to sit by and listen to that abominable Hun language was disgusting to me as an American and I arose and left the park in disgust." He even suggested that an ordinance be passed in Hoboken prohibiting the talking of the "Boche" language, "at least for the duration of the war. If our language is not good enough for these cultured people, let them return to the country whence they came."

A headline in the local paper on August 12 claimed that the city was then thirty per cent more American than it had been a year and a half before. By what statistical formula—Gallup was not then sampling the population—the writer had arrived at his figure, I cannot inform you.

In July somebody recalled that a few pro-German city employees had made certain anti-Allied statements before our country had entered the war. Therefore, they promoted, with the full support of the local paper, an investigation into alleged pro-Germanism at the City Hall. Griffin, then mayor, and the commissioners had to climb on the patriotic bandwagon and cheer the investigators on. HUNS ARE ENTRENCHED IN THE CITY HALL read one headline in the *Hudson Observer* of July 23, 1918. The furor died down when the investigators found no warranty for their fears.

Mrs. Emily L. Voight, on March 9, 1918, waved the Stars and Stripes from the upper window of her apartment on First Street as the soldiers marched on their way to the Army piers for transportation to France. Although her old gray head did not have to serve as a target for alien bullets and flag-waving was a common occurrence in the city at the time, she earned for herself the title of Hoboken's Barbara Frietchie. The press perhaps overlooked the fact that the original Barbara was of German extraction.

A cartoon published by the New York *Herald* of April 28, 1918, enraged the Hobokenites to the point of violent editorial invective. It shows the Dutch population in the heat of attempting to eliminate all traces of their German ancestry. Street names and store labels are being revised. Gustav Schmalz's Meat Market revives as O'Reilly's. The Krausmeyers insist on being called O'Hara until the war is over.

Readers wrote the local paper, suggesting that "First Street" be changed to "Evergreen Valley" or "France Road" or "Military Avenue." One lone sailor suggested that they leave the name as it is. Someone wanted the name "Thierry" substituted for the present "Hoboken."

Because a truck driver joked in answering a serious question put to him by one of the citizenry, the man pulled a revolver, forced the driver into court, and charged him with being a "seditionist." Investigation proved the driver a sound citizen with the requisite percentage of Americanism.

When a policeman removed an Allied nation flag because the staff had broken and the flag was touching the ground, an hysterical crowd accused him of tearing down the flag and dragged him to court. The hearing brought out the facts, and somebody's face turned red.

One citizen supposedly refused to donate to the Red Cross and reportedly spoke unfavorably of that organization. The Hoboken chapter authorities attempted to have him removed from office. Of course the man denied the allegations, showed receipts to indicate that he had contributed, and stated that he had not talked with even one of his accusers about the Red Cross. He had, it turned out, merely refused to contribute to one collector who was unable to show his credentials.

But the Armistice in November, 1918, provided the safety outlet for mob hysteria. Fifteen hundred Americans returned from France on the *George Washington* on December 26, 1918, to a rousing reception. Sentiment in the city favored the idea of the League of Nations. Lieutenant Robert Reiser spoke before the Hoboken Merchants Association on April 10, 1919, to commend the citizenry on its Americanism. He declared it a historical fact that, during the war, there had not been one case of treason in the city, even though a large number of the people were of German extraction and explosives stored for shipment might have been destroyed by those inclined to treason.

Nevertheless, Hoboken had suffered. The real estate confiscated by the government had an assessed value of about eight million dollars. Because some of the owners were unable to rent their properties for business purposes in a military zone, they had received no revenue and could pay no taxes. The property was neglected with consequent disrepair. Many privately owned homes and places of business in the restricted area became dilapidated and untenantable. We used to call the section "No Man's Land." Yet the city had continued to furnish police and fire protection. In the course of thirty-six years to date, Hoboken has lost over sixteen million dollars in real estate taxes, about $450,000 a year. The total assessed valuations for 1917 amounted to $73,177,286. In 1953, $79,919,195 was the total assessed valuation figure, an increase of merely $6,741,909, despite an inflationary trend of almost 100 per cent.

Not only has Hoboken's loss been one of real estate values and taxes. She has also lost considerable manpower. In 1917 the federal government seized the six piers of the North German

Lloyd and Hamburg-American Steamship Lines, paying seven million dollars to the owners. These lines, prior to the seizure, had employed over four thousand men and women as longshoremen, checkers, timekeepers, clerks, and executives. These people lived in or near Hoboken, but when they lost employment, most of them left the city for places where new jobs materialized.

In 1953 the government finally leased to the City of Hoboken, for the legal sum of one dollar per year, the same Hoboken piers for a fifty-year period. The Port of New York Authority, under sublease, will construct new piers over an eight-year period and compensate the city from the profit arising from the operation of these piers. By agreement in September, 1952, the Port of New York Authority guaranteed the city a $300,000 prepayment of pier rental from its anticipated profits over the term of the fifty-year contract. The lease, drawn up among the United States Maritime Commission, the Port of New York Authority, and the City of Hoboken, stipulates that this advance be made to the city yearly in four installments of $75,000 each. Already, $150,000 has been paid to the city.

But, according to Austin J. Tobin, present executive director of the Authority, the project will not show a profit on the completed reconstruction program until fifty years have elapsed from date of contract. Despite the fact that the lease guarantees Hoboken 75 per cent of any profits on the operation of the piers, since such profit is not anticipated before the next forty-nine years, certainly the $300,000 prepayment will constitute all the city can expect for half a century. Perhaps the Port of New York Authority's forecast may prove incorrect.

Actually the Port of New York Authority is launching an ambitious project in redevelopment of the piers. At present it faces an annual payroll of over one million dollars to cover operation, whereas its gross receipts for the first year of the lease amount to approximately $277,000. Of course, it operated only three piers. With expanding facilities, there will follow larger receipts.

In September, 1953, the Authority made public its plan for a

$22,000,000 reconstruction program. The first new pier to be built in Hoboken in twenty-five years, a super Pier C to be completed by 1955 at a cost of over five million dollars, will replace Piers 4, 5, and 6, destroyed at different times by fire. The new installation, located between First and Second streets and opposite Christopher Street, New York City, will measure 700 feet long by 328 feet wide. Based on rustproof steel piling, it will carry two 500 feet of depressed railroad tracks through its center and 680 feet of such railroad tracks fringing the 25-foot-wide north apron, so that docked vessels may receive their cargo direct from the railroad. Every precaution has been taken against fire hazard in the pier's construction.

The pier will provide facilities for the handling of almost double the tonnage of freight and for the employment on the Hoboken waterfront of twice as many people.

The Port of New York Authority next plans the construction within the eight-year period of another new pier in place of the present Pier 3. Such a replacement would bring up to fifteen millions the financial commitment of the Authority to pier reconstruction and development.

Eventually, even a third pier, instead of the present Piers 1 and 2, may spring from the Authority's plans. Such additional renovation would total to twenty-two million dollars its financial commitment to the pier redevelopment program in Hoboken.

In my opinion, Hoboken, under government pressure, has had to take a staggering civic loss, to make up for which the Port of New York Authority lease will bring comparatively small return. After World War I, there was little activity on the city piers; the government could just as well have returned the property to the city for sale to private operators, but, evidently stirred by the fear that the nation needed a base for quick embarkation in the event of another European war, she did not.

When the First World War was in progress, the Honorable Patrick R. Griffin, mayor of Hoboken from 1915 to 1926, called me to a clerkship in the City Water Department at City Hall. I answered the call and remained within call until 1953.

President and Mrs. Woodrow Wilson had left Hoboken on March 5, 1919, for France to attend the Peace Conference. They returned on the *George Washington,* reaching Hoboken at about 3 P.M. on July 8, 1919, the transport docking north of Pier 4 near the *Leviathan.* The full implications of the Versailles Treaty and an emasculated League of Nations were not yet apparent when the presidential party, received by Mayor Griffin and his fellow commissioners and Mayor Hague of Jersey City and his City Commission, was paraded up River Street to Fourth Street to Washington. From Washington the procession escorted by three hundred patrolmen from Jersey City continued down to Newark Street and then to the D., L. & W. ferry *Ithaca,* which carried the party to the West Twenty-third Street, New York, ferry slip.

The editor of the Hoboken *Observer* stuck another feather in the municipal cap in his daily editorial: "Little Hoboken has a way of doing things of this sort in the right way, for no other place seems as able to get up a parade or a celebration quite so quickly—and quite so well—as Hoboken."

Mayor Griffin, in his fifties, had all the traits of a successful, baby-kissing politician. He was leader of the Democratic City Committee. Pleasant to look at, with hair parted on the left side, and affably smooth and urbane—he was an excellent mixer—Griffin, medium of height, had graduated from keeper of a tavern located opposite the City Hall. As a matter of fact, many Hoboken mayors—and I mean no disrespect—have, like the next incumbent, Gustav Bach, graduated into office from presiding at the bar. Griffin lived at 108 Bloomfield Street, a few doors from the municipal offices.

Griffin meant what he said to you when he spoke. His eye could take on an Irish, I'm-the-boss-here glint when his political hand was on the helm of the ship of Hoboken's civic life. He let opposition to his measures blow itself out. His stock expression with regard to objections was, "It'll be forgotten in nine days, watch and see!" And when the gale had subsided, he quietly pushed through his ordinance at the next meeting of the city commissioners.

Governor Alfred E. Smith and John Rascob were intimate friends of the mayor. Frequently the trio would repair to Rascob's yacht moored at Hoboken and steam off out into Long Island Sound for greater privacy.

While I was serving as secretary to William H. Gilfert, who in turn was secretary to Mayor Griffin until 1926, I found myself right at the pressure point of city politics. Gilfert has always proved himself an adept political shock absorber. He has, since then, climbed high on the ladder of public distinction. A capable lawyer, he rose from attorney-at-law in 1920 to counselor in 1924, then assemblyman (1925-26), to Hoboken's directorship of revenue and finance from 1926 to 1943. After an original appointment by Governor Edison, he has been repeatedly elected to the office of county clerk.

Griffin was certainly no philanthropist, but he did give me something. I cherish a glass-enclosed, four-leaf clover, bound with gold—a charm for my watch chain, he said. At the time he had taken it from the safe, he just didn't know what to do with it, and I happened to be around.

As mayor, he devoted most of his time to the enticement of industry to settle in Hoboken and the installation of a city sewer system that later did not live up to expectations.

Patrick R. Griffin managed to keep the city in the Democratic column for years; through his leadership Hoboken became known as the "Gibraltar of Democracy." Stricken in 1925 with a serious illness from which he did not recover, Griffin was succeeded by Gustav Bach, former director of revenue and finance, in 1926. Director of Public Safety Bernard N. McFeely, uncle of the present superintendent of Hoboken schools, was elected by the City Committee to take Griffin's place as leader of the Democratic City Committee. As time went on, Bach, in turn, rose to the county clerkship.

About this time I acquired the nickname of "Doc." When college teams used to compete on the campus at Stevens Institute, a player would often require first aid. Dr. Traeger, the proprietor of the drugstore on the corner of Washington and Ninth streets, used to run out to take care of the injured. I, when on hand as a spectator, used to run after him with a first-aid kit and assist with the dressings. Hence, "Doc."

Without intent, I found myself on January 3, 1919, marked for participation in a rather melodramatic rescue.

About seven that morning screams from the first floor startled our family living at 1115 Washington Street. Someone was shouting, "Fire!" Father and I rushed downstairs to find a hysterical mother in the doorway and behind her two bedrooms in flames.

Even the baby carriage was on fire, and in it a screaming infant. Father grabbed the baby from the carriage and put out the flames. An ambulance, hastily summoned, rushed the child to the hospital, where it died later of third-degree burns. In one bedroom four kids, paralyzed with terror, glued themselves against the wall. I rushed into the room, dragged them out two at a time, and the firemen did the rest.

We never did find out who or what had started the fire.

Yet I never did join the Fire Department, although the next day Mark Ryan, the secretary to the Director of Public Safety, presented me with an old fireman's hat.

CHAPTER VIII

The Water "Woiks"

If you want to meet the citizens of your home town, get a job in the Water Department. All you do to bring about a get-together is shut off the water.

Our Water Department's location in the City Hall made it necessary for us to rub elbows with other divisions engaged in civic administration. The tax collector's office, for instance, made frequent use of our files. The commissioners would often drop in and ask one of us to take a letter or two. While Edward Murnane was freeholder, to illustrate, I wrote about two thousand letters for him during the nine years he served in this capacity.

We saw politics in action. The budding politician can find no better school than the City Hall for the practical aspect of applied government and political power, but let him go there with certain basic convictions regarding conscientious service to his community. Certainly the party intrigue and the personal feuds marking the city's government or mismanagement did not escape us.

A few facts about the Hoboken water system will be in order here. In 1857 the first water mains were laid in the city. The city owns, without bonded indebtedness, thirty-six miles of water mains, varying from four inches to thirty inches in diameter. About 4,800 services consume a daily average of some eight million gallons. The Water Department is self-sustaining.

Actually, Hoboken purchases its water from Jersey City, which has its watersheds in Boonton, New Jersey. The water flows by gravity from the Summit Avenue Reservoir through a thirty-six-inch-diameter main line pipe. The ninety-pound-per-square-inch pressure at the point of intake is cut down by regulators to fifty pounds, and the main line pipe gradually branches off into three feed lines, twenty-four-, sixteen-, and twelve-inch mains, thence through Hoboken's distribution system.

The present director of revenue and finance, plumbing contractor Walter F. Geiger—and he ought to know—is rather concerned about the state of disrepair in which the present system finds itself. Mr. Geiger, whose family has made the city its home for the past 107 years, warns that, at points where filled-in material provides loose packing around the lines, pipe is fast deteriorating and requires intermittent repair. Valves at points are beginning to leak. The lady who complained that she had the plumber every day may really have needed one.

In the light of the fact that some of the lines have been in use for many years, the need for repair is not surprising.

But back to the office! You must meet the "boys" who kept the Hoboken Water Department functioning properly during my time.

Tom Muir, "the Boss," was a veteran of World War I. He had been a prosecutor's detective before joining our office force, and when a customer zoomed into the office with the threat, "I'll not pay the bill, you are a bunch of robbers," Tom Muir's heavy hand would take up the gage of battle. You couldn't tell Tom much that he didn't already know. His favorite expression was "Don't tell me! I know the score!" And he usually did.

Another veteran of World War I, George Bach, whose father, Gustav Bach, was mayor of Hoboken from 1926 to 1930, liked the water so well that he couldn't resist employment that had to do with dispensing it. We called him "Skipper" because he and a group of his friends owned the Rumson Boat Club on the Shrewsbury River in New Jersey. Whenever the club members took deep-sea fishing trips, "Skipper" piloted the launch. For thirty-two years I worked harmoniously with "Skipper" Bach, principal clerk bookkeeper.

Most of the "boys" had served in World War I. Senior Clerk George Cornils, particularly, had been a sergeant. Evidently in those trenches his sustaining hope had been the memory of Coney Island and the smell of the sea. "Just one more chance to sniff that good old salt breeze again!" he used to say to himself. Well, Snuffy Cornils spent most of his spare time after office hours strolling the Coney Island boardwalk, deeply inhaling the ocean breezes.

Inspector Frank Flynn supervised very efficiently our meter section. When such complaints as "Bill too much, too high!" or "The meter is surely out of order!" came across the counter, Inspector Flynn placated the customer with the cold facts.

Mike Lynch and Frank Buerger, the boys who "went right into the cellar," knew their meters like old friends. They even called them by pet names. A customer would claim, "The meter must be wrong!" Mike would prove the reading correct. Although the complaint, "Your meter man must have been out all night," was often more true than false, Frank usually confirmed the reading exact as taken. Later, Mike and Frank sent sons to serve their country in World War II. Mike's son returned home to serve on the police force, but Frank's boy had no choice: he was killed in action.

Ben Gregory, bookkeeping machine operator, earned himself the epithet "Rich Ben" because he always appeared at the office dressed like the model in the Arrow Collar advertisement. During the war he had been deposited in a barn made into an improvised hospital, after German shrapnel and poison gas had laid him low. During his convalescence a poisonous spider, evidently an ardent Nazi, had bitten him. For a while the doctors did not expect him to live, but he recovered, almost blind and deaf. I certainly admired his pluck.

Another veteran, likable Mike Damato of the bulging biceps, had developed a suave, businesslike manner quite out of keeping with what one would expect of an ex-sergeant.

Bill O'Toole, the "Irisher," had missed his calling. Instead of clerking in the Hoboken Tax Department, he should have been in Hollywood before the cameras as a comedian. To prove that point, all one would have to do when Bill visited our department to check up on present whereabouts of tax evaders would be to get him started on his stories.

"Curly" Benny Bier, another senior clerk, merited his nickname because he was as bald as a billiard ball. And no wonder Benny had no hair! Benny and his father had piled up about one and a half million dollars through the operation of a wholesale baking concern. Along came the 1929 crash! They were wiped out. Benny became a subdued clerk in our District Court Office.

His three sons served in World War II. Daniel later became a lawyer. Jesse, who graduated from Bucknell and did advanced work at Princeton, is now a professor with his doctorate at the University of Colorado. William helps as engineer in the manufacture of airplanes.

Punning among us brought a laugh now and then. "Skipper" Bach provided the "Bach" (pronounced "Bock"), and "Curly" Bier added the rest of the beverage when we welcomed anyone to the office to wet down his parched throat.

Moreover, when the boys in our office were asked how they felt, they would invariably answer, "The same as Jack Fields (feels)!"

Many an irate customer, sometimes of foreign extraction, would convulse us over a water bill he considered too high.

One woman objected because "we never take a bath," and, believe me, she looked it.

Another boasted, "I seldom take a bath; when I do, I go to my son's in Brooklyn," where the water was probably purer.

"In my daughter's house they have larger baths and pay less," fumed another Irish lady, who perhaps had in mind the Roman baths of Caracalla.

We listened to the customer who couldn't pay because his bank had failed. We reasoned with the Italian matron who argued, "No wonna paya da rent in a depress. Why I should pay for da water?"

The prize, though, was awarded to a Russian who owned a small house on Willow Terrace. We called him "Bull" because, a block away, one could hear him whisper. To speak, with him, was tantamount to addressing a gathering of five thousand buck privates a mile off.

For a few months he had not been paying his water bills. The boss, after much blowing and blasting from the "Bull," minced no words: "You either pay in twenty-four hours, or no water!"

The "Bull" tore his hair, popped his eyes, frothed at the mouth, and grew red in the face. Speechless, he faced us. I thought his veins were going to burst. Then, in a gesture of profound repudiation, he tore open his shirt, gripped his crucifix, and, kissing it, thundered, "I hope you drop dead!"

He tore out of the office. The mayor and the other City Hall employees parted before him. Everybody roared.

Evidently during the night the severity of his curse began to weigh upon his conscience. The thought of eternal damnation did not bring him too much comfort.

The next morning, a sullen "Bull" plunked down twenty-four dollars in payment of his arrearage, in our presence raised his crucifix to his lips, and muttered, "Hey, you! I change mind! I don't hope you drop dead, just die soon!"

He planted a kiss on the crucifix, pulled a face at us, and breathed a sigh of relief.

CHAPTER IX

Blood on the Moon

As you already surmise, this chapter is going to deal with a few high spots in Hoboken's contribution to violent death. In the long run, the city has probably had no more, no fewer, than the usual run of homicides. Yet Hoboken offers, somehow or other, the proper setting for an occasional corpse. With its murky waterfront and its densely packed housing, the mile-square city sometimes, as Stevenson puts it, cries aloud for a murder.

Well, it got what it cried for on July 25, 1841, in one of the most famous unsolved crimes. The murder of Mary Cecelia Rogers served even Edgar Allan Poe with a plot for his well-known short story, "The Mystery of Marie Roget."

The facts in the case indicate that Mary, the twenty-two-year-old daughter of a widow running a boarding house on Nassau Street, New York, had left home on this date to visit an aunt. She had assured her mother that her sweetheart, Daniel Payne, a lodger at her mother's house, would call for her and escort her home.

Because of a thunderstorm, Payne did not keep his appointment. When Mary did not return the next day, he visited the aunt to find that she had not even put in an appearance there on Sunday.

The following Wednesday several fishermen discovered a woman's body, face badly battered, floating in the Hudson off Hoboken. She had been choked by a piece of lace from her underthings. Her wrists revealed cord burns. Her clothing was ripped, and her dress and slip tied about her waist like a sling as if the body had been dragged. Scratched shoulders pointed to the same conclusion. She had been violated.

After a hasty identification, Mrs. Rogers ordered the body buried without publicizing the fact, in order that scandal might be avoided. But when a local paper published news of the burial, the authorities disinterred the corpse and started an investigation. Although Payne was immediately suspected, he provided a verified alibi and was released. Later, when the police failed to find the murderer, Payne did, however, commit suicide by taking poison. His last note stated his love for Mary and his reluctance to continue living without her.

A woman innkeeper in Hoboken reported that a dark gentleman and a young lady had procured refreshment at her place and then entered the woods at the Elysian Fields. A short time later a group of roisterers had procured refreshment and left without paying their bill to enter the woods by the same path. After a while, the innkeeper heard a scream, but accepted the sound as quite usual in the Elysian Fields. She saw the rowdies hurriedly recross the Hudson.

The police discovered that Miss Rogers had disappeared three years before under mysterious circumstances while she was a salesgirl for a tobacco merchant called Anderson, whose store was located on lower Broadway. Upon her return a week later, her mother said she had been out of town on a visit. Rumor had it that she had eloped with a naval officer whose refusal to marry her had occasioned her return home.

Because, two days before the murder, another girl who had returned to a boat to pick up a forgotten parasol had been attacked by a gang of six ruffians, the police were inclined to think Mary's murder the result of a like incident. Months after the murder, playing children found Mary's parasol, her initialed handkerchief, and white petticoat in a thicket near Sybil's Cave. Someone had done a poor sleuthing job. Broken bushes and trampled ground indicated a struggle, and a trail as if a body had been dragged led from the spot to the river. But no clues, no solution. The case has remained a mystery.

Poe took the position that the naval officer had murdered Miss Rogers. Only he would have dragged the body—six men would have carried it—in the sling tied with typical strong sailor's knots. Only he would have secretly removed the empty boat found the Monday after the crime and moored to the revenue officers' barge office. Too, a "dark" stranger, according to the woman innkeeper, would naturally be tanned by exposure to the sun. Usually sailors displayed deep suntan.

The father of the American mystery story took the gruesome data and wove the facts into a skillfully reasoned detective tale. Actually, his fictional detective, Monsieur C. Auguste Dupin, demonstrated far more ingenuity in analyzing the crime than either the New Jersey or the New York police.

Here's another gory reminiscence to startle the reader, one in which I was an actual witness.

As I sat on the stoop of my home at 1115 Washington Street, trying to get a breath of air that sweltering May 9, 1920, at 1:30 in the morning, I had almost dozed off despite the sudden spring heat wave, when cries for help roused me.

A few doors away at 1127 Washington Street, a man yelled for assistance. I ran to him to find our neighbor, Fred Reucker, president of a toothpaste tube manufacturing company, shouting that someone had shot him. He was trying to staunch the flow of blood from the bullet wound in his stomach. He leaned against me, faint from loss of blood.

I hailed a passing motorist and loaded Reucker into the car, which rushed him to St. Mary's Hospital. He died shortly after admission.

The neighbors soon gathered. Policeman Paddy Lane—years after, to be shot and killed less than fifty feet from the same spot—pushed me ahead of him up to Reucker's top-floor apartment. Armed with club and gun, he ordered me to look in the closets for the assailant. This, I felt, was going just one step too far. Why should I risk my precious neck while the arm of the law was fully equipped to do the dirty work. Hence, I deferred to Paddy. He gave me a scornful glance and took over, but ever after I know he labeled me a coward. I noticed, however, that the gun in his hand shook as he stepped forward.

We found that the murderer had evidently entered Reucker's apartment by means of a rope which had been knotted at intervals to serve as a ladder and, one end being tied around the chimney on the roof, had been suspended over the side of the building above an open window. Mr. Reucker had surprised the thief before he had been able to take anything. Or had his motive been other than theft? The man had fired the fatal shot and rushed down the steps after his victim. On the ground floor he had escaped through the rear entrance.

Mr. Orenge, a certified public accountant living nearby, ran up to tell us that he had just seen a man jump the fence around the corner and then disappear down Hudson Street. We tried to follow him, but could not locate him.

The next morning someone found the death gun two blocks away in a basement areaway. The police picked up and questioned several suspects, but they released all. To this day the murder remains unsolved.

I shall never be able to erase from my mind the sight of sudden death in Reucker's eyes that spring morning under the street light.

In 1942, during World War II, when the threat of German and Japanese air attack started community organization of civil defense units, I became an air-raid warden. One requirement I had to face in order to qualify was recording my fingerprints.

To the surprise of Lieutenant George Solleder of the Police Identification Bureau at Hoboken and Sergeant Martin Kelly, my fingers left mere smudges upon the paper.

Human fingerprints generally fall into classifiable patterns.

The configurations of skin ridges take on identifiable forms that occupy certain categories, even though individual differences within those groupings exist.

Mine lack the customary friction ridges, especially on the fingertips. Even the Federal Bureau of Investigation reported to the Hoboken police that my prints defied classification in 1942.

Upon investigation I find that the Criminal Investigation Laboratory for the United States Army's Far East Command under the general supervision of Lieutenant Colonel Calvin H. Goddard unearthed, through the work of Sergeant Leon Emerson, Acting Chief of the Identification Section, two cases of Japanese lacking friction ridges on their fingers.

Tatsue Takeshito joined the Hamamtsu police force in Shizuaka Province only to amaze the administrators with fingerprints that looked like modernistic studies in telephotography. His mother, he claimed, likewise lacked prints with a definite pattern. In fact, both he and his mother lacked friction ridges on palms of their hands and soles of their feet. The Criminal Investigation Laboratory verified Takeshito's statement by fingerprinting and footprinting the newly appointed Japanese police officer and his mother.

The meaning of all this? Well, one has to secure a special dispensation from the Navy or War Department to secure an employee a special pass to high-secret areas. The authorities, stupefied by fingerprints that wouldn't conform, finally gave me the "OK" for my air warden appointment and later for my Coast Guard pass when my work required frequent visits to the dock area of Hoboken during World War II.

A life of crime has never held any supreme attraction for me, but had the Federal Bureau of Investigation not known of my peculiar case, I might have had a lot of fun with the police with my baffling finger smudges.

The Roaring Twenties brought Prohibition and the consequent rum-running to Hoboken. Since the saloon business in the city provided one of the chief means of economic survival, the national shutdown on alcoholic beverages and real beer gave the municipality a real shock. The speakeasy and the secretly unloaded truck in the dark of night and the ready guns of gangsters in control—Hoboken knew all these.

During the afternoon of March 7, 1930, I found myself, about two o'clock, leaving the City Hall and walking toward Hudson Street for a dish of clams at Duke's House.

Francis (Frankie) Dunn, retired leader of New Jersey beer-runners, must have begun to feel that afternoon like an accepted citizen of Hoboken. As he sauntered toward the seven-story building at 68 Hudson Street which he had bought outright, he smiled to himself. He had made his pile. Six months before, he had pulled out. The going had been getting hotter and hotter. He wanted no more of it—the long dark nights on the Jersey beaches waiting for the boys to float in the foreign stuff, the grinding of gears as the speeding, lightless truck tore along the dusty country roads, your hand on a gun hugged to your hip. It had been too close a gamble with death. He was happily out of it all.

Of course, at the time I didn't know that Dunn walked ahead of me, a man marked for violence. But I'll bet he was congratulating himself on his vision and his good taste, as he fingered his red-and-white striped four-in-hand, in making wise investments, like buying a building and a stake in the Verdi Cooperage Company, the barrel factory. Fortunately a man could provide the barrels to put the stuff in without risk of federal prosecution.

Yep, glad he was out of it. And none too soon. James "Bugs" Donovan, his salesman, had gone on a one-way ride last November in Manhattan. Then that Brooklyn bootlegger, Harry Veasy, had turned up, shot to death, in front of 718 Madison Street, Hoboken, last December.

Mysterious killings! Police baffled! Sure, nobody was talking! But he knew a thing or two. He'd bet a neat wad that . . .

And he pushed his six feet of brawn through the lobby door into his office building, nodding his head with the dawn of a suspicion.

Well, whaddaya know? Speak of the devil! There the very man stood, facing him ominously from the shadows of the lobby.

"Hello, Frankie!" The words had a hollow ring, like out of a sound chamber. You might almost call them threatening. The man moved toward him slowly, relentlessly.

"My God!" Then Frankie lost the power of speech. His tongue went thick and stuck to the roof of his mouth. Under his right arm the man held a sub-machine gun.

From either side a guy sprang at him. One swung a fist to the side of Frankie's face, and the other whammed him on the back of the head with a blackjack. Frankie fell forward to one side, sprawling, half conscious, on the tile floor. The gun spouted a stream of fire at the ex-beer-baron.

Yet only two of the twenty-four shots found their mark. Frankie Dunn was slated to die that night at 10:50 o'clock in St. Mary's Hospital. "Bye-bye, Frankie!"

A lookout with a revolver popped his head in the door. "Hey, guys, let's go! The cops!" The four dashed from the building. The killer and the lookout ran through the Public Service trolley cut. The other two jumped into a car and scattered pedestrians in a wild getaway.

Patrolman Charles Smith, ascending the steps of the trolley trestle at Washington and Ferry streets, heard the shots and, shortly after, saw a man cutting through the Public Service right-of-way to Washington Street. He gave chase. The escaping killer and his accomplice opened fire on him, but Smith returned it, running from telephone pole to pole for cover. He pressed hard upon the men, one running up Washington just in time to jump aboard the runaway car, the other with the sub-machine gun backing into a hallway at 64 Washington Street.

The men in the fleeing car had exchanged shots with Officers John O'Toole and Arthur Marotta (present Hoboken Director of Public Safety), and Chief of Police Edward J. McFeely. The sedan had brushed against three children, slightly injuring them but more particularly scaring them into a state of shock. Patrons leaving the Rialto rushed back into the theater lobby, hysterical and screaming. Some boldly watched the gun duel, unprotected, through the windows. But the gunmen's car, slowing to pick up the thug on Washington Street, sped off without anyone's being able to stop it.

A machine-gun bullet had clipped Patrolman O'Toole in the hand. He lost two fingers.

The killer fared not quite so well.

The police, with steady fire, closed in on the building at 64 Washington Street. Then occurred a lull and dead silence. Who would enter the hallway to rout out the murderer? He might be lurking in some dark corner, ready to pump lead into the first one attempting to take him.

Arthur Marotta and others slipped cautiously into the tenement hallway. Steadily they crept from floor to floor: first, second, third. A single shot rang out. They fell flat to the floor. Then again silence.

Slowly one of the men inched up the stairs to the fourth-floor landing. The boys below watched him signal them to hurry up and join him. He disappeared over the stair rim.

When the police reached him, the officer was covering with his revolver a prostrate form, blood oozing from the dead man's right temple. Fallen from the killer's outstretched right arm lay the murder weapon, the sub-caliber machine gun. A skylight at the top of the fourth flight had blocked his escape. He had killed himself by a shot to the head. He was Frank Dugan of West New York.

Chief of Police McFeely and Captain Thomas Garrick tried to link the killing of Dunn to the Donovan and Veasy murders that winter. They feared the flare-up of a war of elimination between rival bootleg gangs.

Then H. Engel, Dunn's friend, was slain on March 14. In rapid tempo another killing followed: M. Green, beer racketeer, fell under a spray of gunmen's bullets on the eighteenth. He was reported as an associate of the Dunn gang under investigation.

On March 23 J. McGlone and W. Cassidy underwent questioning by the police in connection with recent slayings, but the gentlemen, possessed of satisfactory alibis, were released.

The gun used in the killing of Dunn was finally traced to

Hoboken Patrolman E. Beban, who admitted selling Dugan, the killer, the weapon. Beban was suspended, but reinstated on April 12.

Presumably, killing had canceled out killing, for the bootleggers calmed down after that. Anyway, the government voted out Prohibition soon after, and Hoboken quenched its thirst unmolested.

Man's inhumanity to man was never so clearly revealed as in the Harry L. Barck case. Likewise, the trial of a young man underscores the importance of the work of a capable defense lawyer in protecting his client against miscarriage of justice. Without the efforts of Samuel Leibowitz, the defendant, with the political cards stacked against him and the evidence pointing to homicide, might have forfeited his life for first-degree murder instead of receiving sentence on the manslaughter verdict handed down.

But suppose we start at the beginning. During the depression years many a Hoboken citizen, broke and hungry, set aside his pride to ask for assistance from the city through the poormaster, Harry L. Barck. From time to time I saw the stream of supplicants and heard the harangues and arguments that came from Barck's office, right next to the Water Department in City Hall.

From all indications, the poormaster was not very popular with the unfortunates in Hoboken. Some said that he was too niggardly with relief funds; others said that he made one feel like a parasite upon the city. The facts point to a parsimony in administering the relief funds that would have made Shylock hang his head. Quentin Reynolds, in his book on the career of Samuel Leibowitz, *Courtroom*, maintains that Barck cut down to two hundred the city relief cases from the original seven thousand that had appeared on Hoboken's relief rolls when he had assumed the responsibilities of his office. In any event, a wave of popular disfavor settled into complete hostility.

On February 25, 1938, at 11:30 A.M., while we were busily working nearby, a terrific commotion emanated from the poormaster's office. Shouts and recriminations prompted us to discover the cause. As I rushed toward the door, a yell of terror gripped me and held me petrified for a few moments. Then on the threshold I gazed in upon the figure of Barck, slumped across his desk. On the floor a long paper filing spindle lay covered with blood. Leaning against the desk in shocked surprise, a young married man seemed on the point of collapse.

He had entered Barck's office, seeking relief. Barck knew that the man, the son of a former building contractor, had been victimized by a political boycott from securing any building contracts, even building permits, because he and his father had had the temerity to back a losing Republican against the city Democratic machine in a recent election. Barck knew that he had become destitute. His wife and two children had been living on coffee and bread for days, and the man himself had been under doctor's care for mental strain. Yet the family had been receiving practically nothing from the city.

An argument had started, and, according to the young man, Barck had fallen across his desk onto the paper spindle and, when Barck had raised himself, he had pulled the spindle from Barck's chest.

The young man, promptly arrested, was, according to his story, intimidated into a confession that he had brandished the paper file threateningly at Barck; that when the poormaster had rushed at him, he had plunged the instrument into the politician's chest, putting more pressure behind the lunge than he had intended.

During the trial, Samuel S. Leibowitz, undertaking his defense without fee, convinced the jury that the confession had been forced from the defendant. Assistant District Attorney William George prosecuted, but did not press for blood. Leibowitz established the brutal character of Barck and the justification for the defendant's despair and resentment through the young man's own story. He brought out the fact that Barck, to top all indignities, had brazenly suggested on the fatal morning, "Why doesn't your wife go out and swing a bag on Washington Street? She's a good-looking girl."

The defendant stated that he had flung himself upon Barck, who had seized him by the coat lapels and ordered him from the office. In the struggle between the two Barck had fallen across the desk upon the sharp spindle. "The hand of God!" declared the famous jurist. But the New York *Post* stated editorially: "For this homicide the entire community of Hoboken—not one pitiful, desperate, jobless man—stands indicted. . . . The smug, the sleek, the self-satisfied who cheered Barck on from the sidelines as he pinched every penny, as he rolled up an appalling record of inhumanity, killed Barck."

Eleven of the jurors moved for acquittal, but the twelfth insisted on "guilty of manslaughter." Sentenced by Judge Robert V. Kinkead to two years, a lenient sentence urged by Mayor Bernard McFeely, the young man left prison at the end of a year and eight months.

The people of Hoboken, aroused by the treatment the man had received at the hands of Barck and conscious of their responsibility in permitting such a situation to exist, had raised several thousand dollars to support the young man's family during the days of his trial and imprisonment.

Here endeth my experiences with homicide and sudden death. True, they have not been particularly unusual, but they have provided a flash and a shock to living, a flash into the lives of men who live by violence and a shock over the realization that the volcano of human passion may erupt at any time under the seemingly peaceful exterior.

Unlike Theodore S. Fay, who, in 1843, lent his literary touch to a gem of sentimentality entitled *Hoboken: A Romance of New York*, published by Harper and Brothers (who should have known better), at 82 Cliff Street, New York, I do not point the finger of condemnation at Hoboken: "The writer . . . has not the less endeavored to give, with an accuracy not greatly deviating from the truth, one of the cloud of dark and bloody associations which, to the shame of a Christian city, hangs over Hoboken."

A few drops of blood generally accompany a halo.

CHAPTER X

Stevens Heyday

When Colonel John Stevens, Jr., former officer in the Revolutionary Army and treasurer of New Jersey during the war for American independence, bought the confiscated Bayard estate (564 acres) for £18,360 at public auction on March 16, 1784, he unwittingly brought fame to Hoboken.

As a pioneer in the field of engineering science, particularly in railroad and steamboat construction, he was to use his estate as a proving ground for the first American railway, the Hudson for the first steamboat ferry, and the Atlantic Ocean for the first ocean-going steamboat.

After Stevens had purchased the ferry franchise between Hoboken and lower New York—the original of the present Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western Railroad Company ferry—he soon abandoned the ancient method of propulsion by oars and sails. As early as 1787 he had begun work on the screw-propelled steamboat. In the summer of 1802 he constructed one boat, but the first steamboat definitely known as the first to be put in motion on water was his 1804 model, which in May crossed the Hudson.

Actually, the boat antedated Robert Fulton's steamboat, the *Clermont*, by three years. Unlike the side paddle wheels of Fulton's craft, which sailed up the Hudson River in August, 1807, the propellers of Stevens' boat were at the stern underwater. Stevens was the first man to apply successfully, as far as is known, steam as power to twin-screw propellers.

Livingston had been interested in co-operating with Stevens up to the time Livingston had gone to England as our country's representative. There he met Fulton and joined forces with him. In 1803 the New York Legislature granted the Livingston-Fulton Company a monopoly of the waters of New York State on condition that a steam vessel be built within two years. The monopoly lapsed when the men failed to meet the conditions.

Again Livingston and Fulton applied in 1807 for the New York waterways monopoly and received the rights. But the monopoly, some years later, was nullified by the courts, and Stevens with others was again able to use steam for navigating the Hudson.

Nevertheless, Stevens was periodically prevented from employing the Hudson as a proving ground for his steamboats. When his paddle-wheeler, steam-propelled *Phoenix*, begun in 1807, was ready for a trial run, he had to use coastal waters. In 1809 he piloted the boat from New York to Philadephia in thirteen days—the first ocean voyage made under steam power. The *Phoenix* was one hundred and three feet long and sixteen wide, drawing six to seven feet of water.

In 1811 Stevens' *Juliana* (capacity—one hundred persons), twin-screw propelled steamboat, had been intended for New York-Hoboken ferrying, but the Fulton monopoly drove Stevens to send it via Long Island Sound to the Connecticut River to ply between Hartford and Middletown, Connecticut. The *Juliana*, first steamer to navigate the waters of Long Island Sound, measured sixty-two feet long and twelve wide and drew two and a half to three feet of water.

In 1817 the Stevens family sold its interest in the Hoboken Ferry to the Swarthout brothers, who, in 1818, assigned it to Philip Horne. Evidently the Fulton monopoly had discouraged them. From 1815 to 1821 the ferry reverted to the horse for its motive power. John Stevens had, in 1813, devised a ferryboat similar to a catamaran. Six horses moved in a circle at the forepart of the boat to provide the power that turned the paddle wheels.

But the Stevens family, realizing that they were losing a lucrative source of income, repurchased the ferry franchise in 1821 and paid the City of New York an annual rental of eighteen hundred dollars. With the return to steam for ferry power, the ferry system improved, and from 1821 to 1860 Hoboken became the pleasure spot for weary New Yorkers. Stevens had laid out the Elysian Fields earlier in the century. Walks and paths shaded by oak, tulip, and sycamore trees skirted the Hudson and the base of the hill now called Castle Point. Hoboken provided that needed relaxation and an occasional novel dish like turtle meat, a specialty on the west shore. Then, too, the "Aerial Ways," a precursor of our modern Ferris wheel, lifted the rider high above the groves and the picnickers. Stevens' circular railway also proved no small attraction.

Every hour, morning, afternoon, and evening, the Barclay Street-Hoboken Ferry shuttled back and forth. The Christopher Street service went into operation in July, 1836.

To John Stevens must go the credit for introducing into America the first steam railway. As early as 1812 Stevens tried, in vain, to induce the New York Legislature to substitute for the proposed expensive Erie Canal a steam railroad. His convincing arguments before the New Jersey Legislature in 1815, however, elicited from that body a charter to build a railroad between New Brunswick and Trenton, a project never even begun because Stevens could not secure financial backing. Financiers felt no inducement to invest in what the public still considered a "wild and impracticable" scheme.

Yet as late as 1854 an inventor tried to justify his scientific convictions by launching a flying ship at Hoboken. People had really invested in the novel venture, only to lose their money when the completed airship failed to take to the air. Its owner dismantled it in disgust.

Nevertheless, Stevens determinedly went ahead and built in 1826 on his Castle Point estate a locomotive with a multi-tubular boiler running on a circular wooden track. The vehicle reached the speed of twelve miles an hour and carried six people. Stevens' locomotive was the first steam-driven engine to run on a track in America. Living to the ripe old age of eighty-nine, John Stevens saw his prophecy come true: the expansion of rail facilities throughout the nation, bringing increasing speed, ease, and comfort to the traveler and expediency to the shipper.

In 1829 four hotels, a post office, four groceries, three smithies, one wheelwright, two carpenter shops, one livery stable, one distillery, one steel manufacturing plant, three schools, and four to five hundred people comprised Hoboken.

In the same year in "Hoebuck," John Jacob Astor, the richest known American of his time, built Astor Villa on what is now the southwest corner of Washington and Second streets. The building, torn down about fifty years ago, eventually deteriorated into a law-office building with a tavern in the basement.

At Sybil's Cave, opened in 1836, where Castle Point projects farthest into the Hudson and where the East Asiatic Steamship Piers are now located, spring water extolled for its medicinal virtues sold for one cent a glass.

Arriving on the ferry from New York, the visitor to Hoboken would disembark at the foot of a slight hill atop which he saw the Seventy-Six House, a hotel placed somewhat south of what is now Newark Street between Hudson and Washington streets. Sloping down to the river, its expanse of green lawn lent an air of charming freshness to the scene.

From the hotel an elm-lined path led one to Castle Point and farther to the river shore, where, as the River Walk, it passed under the cliffs. Export lines, railroad repair shops, and the tracks of the Hoboken Shore Railroad now obliterate the old landmarks.

At the northern end of the Walk the Elysian Fields, covering an area of woodland corresponding roughly to the land presently bordered by Tenth Street, Willow Avenue, Fifteenth Street, and the riverbank, invited the city dweller to cool retreats and rustic nooks.

Here many famous personages frequently found their way. Madame Jumel, sudden social upstart with a mansion on Washington Heights, paraded her new third husband, the aging Aaron Burr, on the River Walk before the public gaze. Mrs. Trollope, the English authoress, had called Hoboken in the early thirties a "Little Eden."

Fitz-Greene Halleck, poet and wit, Robert C. Sands, New York publisher, and Martin Van Buren, a frequent guest of Astor, made occasional trips to the community. Daniel Webster, Fanny Kemble, and William Cullen Bryant personally visited Hoboken; as a matter of fact, Bryant wrote several poems in the Little White House, a short distance above Otto Cottage. Even Charles Dickens commented on the beauties of the sylvan spot seen from Weehawken during a visit there in 1842.

The Hoboken Directory for 1854–56 lists the name of one Stephen Foster as a resident at 233 Bloomfield Street. The actual number of the house where he wrote several of his popular songs, including "Jeanie, with the Light Brown Hair," was 237. Still standing on the northeast corner of Sixth and Bloomfield streets (Block 205, Lot 3), the house carries a new number, 601. Who can imagine the emotional turmoil that surged within Foster's mind during those years when he was giving to the world unforgettable melodies at the same time his weaknesses were dragging him to his death?

Just recently, on June 5, 1954, to be exact, during the Hoboken Stephen Foster Music Festival, sponsored by the Hoboken Chamber of Commerce, Mrs. Jessie Welch Rose of Pittsburgh, granddaughter of Stephen Foster, unveiled a plaque at 601 Bloomfield Street in honor of her grandfather. The composer's great-granddaughter, Mrs. Ralph Melady of Pittsburgh, and John Tasker Howard, Foster's biographer, were present. The ladies attended as special guests of Foster Hall, the University of Pittsburgh museum devoted to Foster's memory.

Mayor John J. Grogan, representing the city, addressed the assemblage, and a forty-member Hoboken police-and-firemen's chorus sang a number of the Foster favorites. Talented singers from ASCAP, supplemented by a quartet from the Franklin Baker Division of General Foods Corporation, which won the barbershop-quartet competition, provided a background of music popular in Foster's day.

But let's turn back the pages again.

Even P. T. Barnum exploited Hoboken in its turn.

P. T. Barnum's famous buffalo hunt occurred in Hoboken on August 31, 1843. In June, Barnum had discovered in Boston fifteen yearling buffaloes on exhibition. The animals, worn out after being driven East across the Western plains, presented a skittish, flea-bitten appearance, but Barnum's fertile mind originated a scheme.

He bought the herd for seven hundred dollars and brought them to a rented barn in Hoboken. C. D. French, the former owner, agreed to accompany and care for the herd for thirty dollars a month.

Meanwhile, Barnum set the stage for his grand hoax. He chartered the ferryboats for August 31 and told French to practice his lassoing. He announced in the newspapers that a buffalo herd was passing through the metropolis on its way to Europe.

Letters to the editors of New York dailies offered the suggestion that the people of Manhattan would appreciate the opportunity to witness a buffalo chase à la Western frontier on a nearby race course. Would the owner permit them to see some expert lassoing of the ferocious wild beasts? One suggested a race course in Hoboken.

Barnum had already rented the Stevens race course for August 31.

Then the papers began advertising that a "Grand Buffalo Hunt" would take place on the Hoboken race course on that date —all persons to be admitted free of charge. Three exhibitions, one at three, four, and five o'clock, respectively, would demonstrate methods used to capture the wild buffalo—he did not state their age.

French, dressed as an Indian, was delegated to harass the frightened animals from horseback and lasso them as they plunged across the course: "Every man, woman, and child can really witness the *wild sports of the Western Prairies. . . .*" A double railing would enclose the whole course "to prevent the possibility of the buffaloes approaching the multitude."

Twenty-four thousand crossed the North River on the Hoboken Ferry that delightfully warm day. Unfortunately, though French poked the yearlings with a goad, their wild rush did not materialize. All they would do was trot or gallop weakly. The crowd roared with laughter.

Startled by the shouting of the people and alarmed at the blaring of Barnum's free "balcony band," the animals took refuge in a nearby swamp. French could not inveigle them to return to the race course. He finally roped the largest calf and dragged it before the crowd for their entertainment.

Nat P. Willis, then editor of the *Home Journal,* had attended the "buffalo hunt" and written an article after the event on the gullibility of the American public. The ferries leaving Barclay Street shuttled back and forth, crowded to the rails. When Willis' ferry reached the Hoboken side, a ferry equally crowded was pulling away from the Hoboken slip.

The incoming passengers shouted, "Is the buffalo hunt over?"

The outbound replied, "Yes, and it was the biggest humbug you've ever heard of." Willis said the passengers on his boat gave three cheers for the unknown author of the "humbug."

Barnum grossed forty-eight thousand sixpences ($3,500) in ferryboat fares. He more than paid for the ferry charter, the cost of the buffaloes, and the expenses of the hunt.

After several days he announced himself as the author of the joke and used the publicity to turn public attention to his American Museum. What an advertising genius!

"As for the cry of 'humbug,'" he writes, "it never harmed me, and I was in the position of the actor who had much rather be roundly abused than not to be noticed at all."

Under French, Barnum sent his buffalo herd to Camden and hooked the people of Philadelphia on the same line. In time some of the animals were sold in England; others were fattened and sold at fifty cents a pound in Fulton Street Market in the form of buffalo steaks.

For the sporting element the resort offered much *divertissement.* Wasn't the first baseball game in America "under championship rules" played on the Elysian Fields between the Knickerbockers and the New Yorks on June 19, 1846?

And racing? Covering that area now enclosed by Fifth Street, Washington Street, Tenth Street, and Willow Avenue, the Stevens family had laid out a race course, and many a bet was placed on a promising nag.

Yachting? Colonel Stevens' son, Robert L., completed his yacht, the *Maria,* in 1845 to outsail most of the steamboats of her time. To him goes special acclaim for expertness in yacht designing and the building of steamboat hulls and machinery. He also invented and perfected the T-rail, now in use practically unchanged on railroads throughout the world.

A devoted yachtsman, John C. Stevens, Robert's son, helped to found and was the first commodore of the New York Yacht Club with quarters established in 1844 at the foot of the northern end of Castle Point where the River Walk entered the Elysian Fields. The present location would be the foot of Tenth Street.

Then yacht races started from the clubhouse, reached Fort Washington up the Hudson, and stretched down river to the Narrows. In 1875 the New Jersey Yacht Club took over the building, but the erection of the Pennsylvania Railroad repair shops necessitated the floating of the clubhouse to Glen Cove, Long Island.

The Stevenses held part-ownership in the yacht *America* that beat the British yacht in the course around the Isle of Wight. The firm of W. and A. Fletcher Company, Hoboken, upheld the Hoboken tradition by building, after 1880, the machinery for the most renowned yachts in the history of racing competition.

In 1849 Hoboken, formerly a part of North Bergen, became a separate township under its own name, and in 1855 was incorporated into a city with less than seven thousand population. In 1890, however, the populace numbered 48,026. In the same year as that of the city's incorporation, the first stagecoach route, stopping at the Napoleon Hotel, 100 Washington Street, located at the northwest corner of Washington and First streets, was licensed. A reservoir was located at River Street and Sixth Street, and a cemetery ran from Sixth to Seventh streets on Hudson Street.

In 1847 the first social organization in the city, the German Club, was formed. Banks sprang up. School No. 1, through the mayor's agitation, rose in 1858. But when Weehawken annexed Castle Point in 1859, Hoboken had to fight until 1876 to regain her prized landmark.

A man named Coster, who had bought up land from the bankrupt Swarthout brothers, began, in 1860, to lay out his property in building lots. Then real estate boomed.

In his first message to the City Council under its new charter the Honorable Cornelius V. Clickener, first mayor of Hoboken, complained on May 7, 1855, about Sunday violators and night brawlers disturbing the peace of the new city:

> . . . On every pleasant day and, above all, upon Sunday, our streets are filled with a motley assemblage, and instances are not wanting to show that the sacredness of the Sabbath has been disregarded, the peace of the city broken; quiet and orderly citizens assaulted, while the offenders have, in most cases, escaped through want of a properly organized and efficient police. I therefore recommend the passage of an ordinance establishing a day and night police, sufficient in numbers to insure the public tranquility and the preservation of order at all times. . . . Another prolific source of annoyance could, by this means, be put an end to. I refer to the misconduct of parties who have been in the habit of landing from small boats upon our shores at times when honest people should be asleep. They make night hideous with their unseemly conduct, and, on some occasions, their boats, and the personal property of some of our citizens, have taken their simultaneous departure . . .

Clickener also urged enactment of excise laws since the city charter contained no provision regarding sale or regulation of sale of liquor. And he had his troubles about raising funds for education. He complained about the "ill-judged parsimony" that voted the city a trifling $2,500 to keep the present school in operation: "The sum appropriated, with our quota of the state school fund added, is barely sufficient to procure the aid of teachers, while the present building is so small as to be incapable of accommodating one-fifth of the children of the city."

He extolled the beauty of Hoboken, its "contiguity to the city of New York . . . its tasty walks and shady groves." He pointed to it as "a place of general resort in summer. The pleasure-seeker, and the toil-worn mechanic, alike desire to wander among the fields, and breathe our pure and bracing atmosphere."

His words present a true picture, for even before 1855 Hoboken had been "the country" to the high-pressured city dwellers. Washington Irving, William Cullen Bryant, and Robert Fulton would frequently, among others, cross the Hudson for the restful open spaces of that section of the Jersey shore. The Elysian Fields were the picnic grounds for the New Yorkers, and many a lover proposed on the River Walk under a burgeoning moon.

The driving of cattle through the city on the way to market at all times of the day and the night was beginning to annoy the citizenry.

"Excelsior," the new fire engine, was added to the fire-fighting equipment consisting of another engine, a hose cart, and a set of hooks and ladders. Voluntary contributions were creating a fund for the support of disabled firemen and firemen's widows and orphans.

During the Civil War volunteers from the city responded to the Union's cause. School No. 2 was built. The advent of the Hamburg-American Line in 1863 started in Hoboken that waterfront activity in passenger service and shipping that was to make the city a growing ocean port. The Hoboken marshlands, drained in 1866, became terra firma: Hoboken lost its island character and some of its mosquitoes.

Stevens Institute of Technology, in which Stevens Castle housed students as a dormitory, was founded in 1867 and opened in 1870.

The first bobtailed horsecars clanged their threatening advance across town on Washington Street. The turntable at Bloomfield and Eleventh streets switched the horsecar into Bloomfield. In winter, deep straw littered the car floor to keep the passengers' feet from freezing.

In summer Turtle Grove, headquarters of the famous Turtle Club, now located at Kingsbridge, New York, drew gourmets with its snapper soup and turtle meat.

Pop Rodenburgh, proprietor of the Colonnade Hotel, located in the Elysian Fields about where Twelfth Street now runs, dispensed Daniel Hermes' beer over a polished mahogany bar to fathers whose families picnicked outside on sweltering Sundays under the cool elms around wooden tables. The children drank deep from the milk of the Rodenburgh cows. Surviving until the late eighties, this hostelry, erected by Stevens in 1830, served many distinguished guests, General Winfield Scott among them.

The yachtsmen of the New Jersey Yacht Club, located below the Colonnade in a brown wooden building at the foot of Eleventh Street, would often sail up to Fort Lee for a glass or two of beer at Burcheister's hilltop hotel. Here the nostalgic atmosphere of the German *Bierstube* attracted those thirsting after Saxon cheer.

In 1876 the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western Railroad tunneled through Bergen Hill. The present City Hall, completed in 1881, rose on Market Square after the squatters had been forced off the land.

The Hoboken *Evening News,* under the managership of G. A. Seide, brought the local scoops to the people of Hoboken about this time. And one made headlines: in 1893 the world's finest ferryboat, the *Netherlands,* started to operate between New York and Hoboken.

These were the days when Joe Cooke's speaking trumpet used to rally the volunteer firemen to fight the blaze and the faithful Dalmatian accompanied the company to each fire.

CHAPTER XI

I Am Domesticated

In 1920 I joined the Verona Rowing Club at Edgewater, New Jersey. Before I realized it, I had been elected coxswain of the club's most promising boat crew in years. The names of the crew members, if I remember correctly, are John Foster, Oscar Bender, Henry Welbrock, Edwin Firehock, Harry Colson, Al Rathjen, Charley Smith, and Adolph Weiner.

Bert Badgeley, a Wall Street broker, coached us like an overseer and coddled us like a bevy of debutantes preparing for a coming-out party. We used to row up the Hudson for practice, our shell cutting a trim figure, Cambridge-style, on the water. Columbia College owned a boathouse near ours, but our chief rival, the Hudson Boat Club, lay across the river at 110th Street. They challenged us to an eight-oared shell race, and we accepted over mugs of German lager in an Edgewater tavern.

Bert made a speech. "Boys, we'll beat the damned foreigners or know the reason why! We go into real training tomorrow!"

Then for a period of two weeks Bert put the boys through a course of rigorous conditioning that would have done credit to the Marines. He made our muscles quiver like whipcords, our weight disappear, our posterns as calloused as rhinoceros hide, and our palates dry as the Sahara.

Came Saturday before the race: "Boys, you're in the pink! Your eyes are clear, your weight's down, and you got the winning look. Off to bed with you now for a night's sound sleep, and the cup is ours in the morning!"

All would have been well except for Adolph. We were sauntering over to our trolley station that afternoon when Adolph sniffed bock. He paused before the swinging door of the Boatswain's Delight. His nose elevated an inch and drew in the refreshing acrid smell of pungent, new-brewed beer. "Gotta get one drink, boys!" He disappeared.

What could we do? In the spirit of true fellowship we joined him at the bar.

At six o'clock we were the leading lights in the grove behind the Delight. The Amalgamated Hosiery Workers were having a picnic. Each of us adopted a woman. Evidently, hosiery making was not the chief joy in their lives.

At one o'clock Sunday morning I tore Charley away from the head stitcher and, brushing our teary, beery companions aside, pushed the rumbling crew off the premises for home. Once outside, we scrambled for the last trolley to Hoboken.

The next day Bert was heartbroken. The Hudson Boat Club crew left us six lengths behind in Sunday's race. Our shell persisted in turning in circles. We told him we had worried all night and couldn't sleep. And it was not entirely a lie. But Al didn't even have to belch significantly. Bert knew.

Did he lecture us? He gave up coaching our crew. We had forfeited our chance for fame.

In general, I had up to this point escaped the net of the wily, possessive female. I recall, however, one close call. On one occasion, when a spectator at a dance to which my friends had dragged me, I began to "kid about" with a girl named Mary Reagan, whom I knew quite well. Playfully, she snatched my pocket handkerchief, one of three that I had received for Christmas, and danced off with one of the fellows.

I left the dance about 12:30. Upon arriving home, Mother asked me what had happened to my pocket handkerchief. Without explaining I sat down and wrote Mary, asking her to return the handkerchief she had taken in fun from my pocket.

The next day as I entered my home after the day's work, my stepmother informed me that a lady and her daughter were waiting in the front room to speak to me.

Lo and behold! Up sprang Mrs. Reagan and berated me for all the unspeakables in creation! It seems that I was being accused of taking her Mary (who couldn't get a word in by way of explanation) out after the dance at three o'clock, going with friends to dine somewhere, then attending early mass. Mary had reached home at 6:30 A.M. I had kept her daughter out all night!

Mrs. Reagan, in her fury, would listen to neither Mary nor me.

The next day, however, Mrs. Reagan visited the office to apologize. Mary's boy friend had made everything clear; in fact, he had proposed. Thereupon I made a resolution: Never write a letter to explain; just telephone!

When summer arrived, my friends and I for the past ten years had fallen into the habit of arranging our vacations to coincide with one another's. Now incorporated as part of Middletown, Connecticut, Maromas was our rest spot. A large farmhouse owned by John and Louise Hudec, of Czechoslovakian descent, provided real country atmosphere which we city dwellers could appreciate. Here, in 1926, I met the girl I was to marry.

Nettie Stolba, spending those last weeks of August at the farm, had promised to bring back with her over the Labor Day weekend another girl to enjoy the country. Her brother's sweetheart, of Czechoslovakian descent, Edith Hazuka, would enjoy the change.

Part of the vacation fun consisted in the initiating of newcomers into the circle of vacationers. We young men decided to concentrate on Edith when she arrived the Saturday before Labor Day. Ten of us lined up at the Middletown New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad station and one by one received the two girls with open arms as they stepped off the train.

We had practiced *Day me hoobitchkoo* (Czechoslovakian for "Give me a kiss") and showered Edith in particular with affection in the form of embraces and kisses. The bewildered young lady thought she was being welcomed into a society for the propagation of free love.

That afternoon we drank in the beauty of the Connecticut countryside as we lounged on our private beach along the Connecticut River, reached after a hike across the rolling farmlands. On the side, I drank in Edith's freshness and charm.

As part of her continual initiation, we gave Edith her share of duckings. In fact, the situation was beginning to overwhelm her. "Here I come, just a visitor, and these perfect strangers throw their arms about me, and then try to drown me!"

In Edith's presence I felt somewhat shy about my shrunken leg, though I swam even better than the others. The physical contrast with the others was certainly not to my advantage.

In on the plot, Louise Hudec, the proprietress of the farmhouse, set up seating arrangements for dinner so that Buck and Etta Burtis, Charley Stehlik, my brother Bob, and I surrounded Edith, with her friend Nettie off to the side unable to help her. During the meal we all engaged Edith in such animated conversation that she was unable to secure a mouthful of food.

No sooner would someone set before her a plate of mashed potatoes or chicken or some vegetable than one of our group would request it passed to him. We gave her time to reach for the food but never enough to procure it. We talked like machines, had her passing plates like a conveyor belt. The result: she was fully initiated. But she hadn't been able to eat much during the meal.

That night the hostess gave us a garden party with Japanese lanterns glowing in the soft September twilight. We danced and played games until someone suggested a mock marriage.

Before she could recover, Edith, the selected bride, was rushed off by the women and dressed in gingham, on her head a broad-brimmed farmer's straw hat decked with late daisies.

The boys grabbed me and forcefully elected me groom. A soldier's uniform several sizes too small for me did not add to my charm.

Buck Burtis, self-appointed minister, blackened his face and donned his coat backward. Standing at one end of the grape arbor, he struck a pontifical pose as I lumbered, with my laughing bride, toward him under the leafy canopy.

Buck tied the knot quite firmly. He ad-libbed throughout the ceremony in the style of a top vaudeville comedian and pre-empted the bride's first kiss, even threatened to pre-empt the bride herself if I hadn't interfered.

All the time that mock ceremony was taking place, I began to do some wishful thinking. That night, like a kid, I asked God for the moon.

What a weekend! A drive to Hartford, and then to Springfield. Then the car climbing Jacob's Ladder, a winding road that carried us above the clouds into the Berkshires. My spirits soared with the altitude. Edith and I found ourselves often together. But, I thought, she's Louis' girl. What can I do about it?

We parted on that question mark.

Two months dragged by for me. Then one unforgettable November day she telephoned me: she had parted company with Louis. I made a date that afternoon for Loew's State Theater and dinner. I proposed to her six months later.

To make a long story short, Reverend Frank Armstrong, pastor of St. Paul's Protestant Episcopal Church, Hoboken, performed the marriage ceremony on June 17, 1928. Brother Bob, as best man, handed me the ring, while Olga, her sister, was bridesmaid. We escaped for our honeymoon to Atlantic City. God had granted me the moon.

Every man who truly appreciates his helpmate over the years reproaches himself at times for not being able to make fuller and better provision for his wife. I am no exception. In the long run, however, the real reward is the reciprocal fellowship.

CHAPTER XII

Bluegrass

"Field" is a fairly common family name. When we lived at 1115 Washington Street in 1925, a sales agent for Old Dutch Cleanser had a room at 1111 Washington Street. As a matter of fact, we did not know he lived there, much less that his name was Field; in fact, there was no nameplate for him in the house vestibule.

One day up to our house drove a truck. The truckman, one of those fellows who is always right, maintained that he had orders to leave in our basement the whole truckload of Old Dutch Cleanser consigned to Mr. Field. We objected that we had not ordered the stuff, that possibly we were the wrong Fields, that he might be sorry for his insistence. But the truckman was obdurate; he pushed us aside and carted the cleanser, in cartons, to our basement.

A few days later the authentic Mr. Field called and apologized for the mistake. The samples were to be distributed in the neighborhood during an advertising campaign. For our inconvenience he bestowed upon Mother enough Old Dutch Cleanser to chase the dirt out of her life forever.

Coincidentally, the twelfth day in the month has figured quite recurrently in the experiences of my branch of the Field

Family. I, my wife, and my son John were born on December 12, April 12, and February 12, respectively. Furthermore, Dad died of prostate trouble at the age of sixty-eight on October 12, 1927.

Although modern practitioners, one after the other, had attempted to treat him, always he looked down upon their methods and their comparative youth. "Just a kid, that doctor! He don't know anything! I'm not going to play the guinea pig for him!"

The only doctor who could please Dad was one of the least progressive, most outmoded of family physicians in Hoboken, Dr. Pettridge. Because he gave Dad sufficient dope to kill the pain, Dad thought he was working miracles.

My memory takes me back to 1913, when Dad and his brother-in-law George Lincks bought a package liquor store at 1317 Washington Street, Hoboken, and for two years attempted to make a profit in a business, which, in Hoboken, past, present, and possibly future, has always offered and will offer keen competition.

While catering to the taste of the bibulous, Dad learned much about human nature. For one thing, he learned that a man thinks quality is what he has been accustomed to.

One day, tending counter during lunch hour as Dad was leaving the store for a warm meal at home, I faced a gentleman with a flushed countenance named Ferguson. He demanded a gallon of whiskey and pushed a demijohn onto the counter.

"Give him the best!" shouted Dad, as he left the store.

I gave him a gallon of what we considered premium whiskey, a distillation called "bluegrass." The chap sniffed it suspiciously.

About half an hour later he stormed into the store with the wrath of the betrayed on his face and thumped down on the counter the filled demijohn.

"Hey, you! Call this your best? You told me this was your prize stuff, but you've sold me rotgut, boy, outright rotgut!"

Father, who had meanwhile returned, took the whiskey, smelled it, and poured it back into the "bluegrass" barrel. Then he dipped a sample from a barrel of the cheapest stuff in the store. Ten drops of it would have eaten the enamel off your wisdom teeth.

Ferguson gulped it down. His eyes lighted up. "That's the tonic!" he exclaimed. He went happily on his way with the vitriolic brew.

"Next time they ask for the best, give 'em the worst, and they'll love it!" laughed Dad. "You can't teach an old dog a new taste."

Hoboken's policemen and firemen used to gather in my father's store occasionally to chat and gossip. One member of the force had not yet lived down the obsession that to a minion of the law all things are free. Remember the old cartoon of the crushed Italian fruit vendor as he watches the burly Irish cop sample his best plums?

This officer, moreover, was a chronic penny-pincher. Once he walked into Dad's store, ordered a split of stout and ale, and a fifteen-cent cigar, and walked out without even making a gesture toward paying for his purchase. But he did it only once.

The boys on the force told Dad not to be taken in for a fool. "Make him pay, man! He's got enough cash salted away to buy out the town. We know."

The next time the officer attempted to plunder our wares, he found a chorus of bluecoats and a few spare firemen lined up as witnesses to a pending imposition. After stacking up three bottles of Scotch and a box of cigars, he tried to make a quick right-about for the door, but he found himself ringed about by his silent buddies in blue. They blocked his escape.

"Seven dollars and eighty-six cents, Officer, if you please," prompted Dad.

What could he do? He paid like an anemic giving up his last pint of blood. And the boys smiled and waved goodbye.

Nevertheless, Dad lost a dissatisfied welsher.

For three war-troubled years, 1917 to 1920, Dad served the United States Government on the Hoboken Embarkation Piers as a timekeeper. His business venture had not paid off.

Then until illness made it out of the question for him to work, he was an attendant at the Hudson County Park Play-ground in Hoboken. His chief duty was watching the children, a job he relished as he liked kids.

Significantly, during the Prohibition period, Father turned down several enticing offers from enterprising bootleggers interested in securing his services as a compounder. Such money, tainted with illegality, was not for him, he declared.

That autumn morning, as my stepmother, my brothers, and I sat around the breakfast table, I'll never forget. The nurse said quite simply, "You'd better come. He's dying."

Standing at his bedside, we watched the departure of a sincere, hard-hitting, practical man who never saw the heroic in just doing one's duty.

CHAPTER XIII

City Hall

All work and no play, they say, and what have you? Certainly the "boys" at City Hall combined conscientious work with occasional pranks and good-natured fun that made civic employment more of a big-family relationship.

The story behind Mike Mulvaney's refusal to serve on any more political committees will illustrate my point. Mike Mulvaney was chairman of the committee to provide the food at the Fifth Ward Democratic Club's forthcoming Irish Night. One of us at City Hall, Mike tried to do the best he could in his bluff Irish way, but he had his favorites, too. He ordered all the corned beef from his preferred butcher and all the potatoes and cabbage from his one favorite grocer.

This, to our minds, was a bit overhanded. We took the matter under advisement and decided that he was not justly spreading the patronage. Consequently, the fellows in the different offices took turns calling him up and representing themselves to be disgruntled butchers and grocers who wanted to know why they hadn't received the order. Weren't they residents of the Fifth Ward?

Mike stood the fireworks for a while, then threw up his hands in disgust. “A head of cabbage from every grocer in the Fifth Ward! Begorra, that’s spreadin’ it too thin for me!” He promptly in rather emphatic terms served notice on everyone that there would be no more committee memberships for him!

I will never forget the joke we played on Dick Hansen and Arthur Shevon in the building custodian’s office. During lunch hour they were usually left in charge. Frequently, the “boys” in adjacent offices would pretend to be “big shots” and call up and ask to speak to employees of the department that they knew were not then in the office. Dick or Art could hardly hold the receiver to his ear as the voice at the other end of the wire berated him because its owner could never reach the commissioner or some other city employee—usually himself—when he needed information. So that was the way they worked for the city? “My hard-earned money . . .”

For a week we carried on a hoax that had poor Dick and Art biting their fingernails and tearing their hair. One chap, an employee in the city treasurer’s office, telephoned requesting them to have removed from his family’s back yard a towering elm. Actually, such tree removal is not the city’s job, but Dick and Art would have moved mountains to gain the public favor. After a few minutes another co-worker, pretending to be the father of the son who had first called, very suavely asked them to disregard his son’s request. The whole thing was a personal matter. The son was not completely sound mentally. Just overlook everything.

The next day the irate son raised the roof with Dick for not having the tree taken away, and a few seconds later the father apologized for his son’s behavior and canceled his son’s demands. This went on for several days. Dick and Art, at their wits’ ends, would wring their hands and ask our advice. What a bully that young blackguard was! So he’d have them fired! And how pleasant and gentle, the old chap!

Then the fake father delivered a telephone invitation to the two boys to lunch with him at Meyer’s the next day. Spruced up in their finest, Dick and Art published their good luck that morning far and wide, but waited in vain that noon for the appearance of their host. On their return they did not dare say a word about their disappointment.

There were a few unrestrained snickers. We didn't dare let the cat out of the bag, or there would have been another murder in City Hall. But did you ever want to burst out laughing behind a poker face?

Jacob Scott, assistant custodian of City Hall, came in one day with a pain in his shoulder. He wanted sympathy; so the boys took a personal interest in his case and thoroughly examined and questioned him.

I came up with the conclusion that he was suffering from dyskinesia of the shoulder (impairment of voluntary movement).

When Dr. Paul Broeser, happening along, heard the tale of woe from Scott about his diagnosis, he laughed his sides sore. Dyskinesia is a term usually applied to constipation.

One of my pranks nearly netted me a smashed nose. One midmorning, when I was glancing out the window at City Hall, I saw a local reporter from one of the local papers enter a bakery-luncheonette across the street for his daily cup of coffee with doughnuts. He had the reputation of being a notorious dunker.

Suddenly I got an idea. I called the bakery and asked to have the chap paged. When he answered, I told him bluntly, "Stop your dunking! I can hear you all over Washington Street!"

He banged up the receiver and rushed out of the lunchroom in a rage. Later at the City Hall offices he began to rave about what he would do if he ever found out who had put in that call. I heartily agreed with him that the culprit deserved a punch in the nose.

Sometimes I was the butt of the joke. One budding spring day I exhibited before the "boys" a newly purchased derby of the latest style. I modeled it, à la Fifth Avenue, got a few smart comments, and then replaced it in the hatbox.

That evening after a glowing description of my bargain-seeking and my treasure-find, I reached into the hatbox to produce an old greasy felt top-piece. My wife looked at me rather quizzically, drew nearer, and sniffed my breath. Then she burst out laughing.

I got back my new derby the next day.

We had a stock joke at the City Hall for every new employee. The new employee, in learning "the ropes," would frequently come to us with questions. The boys always sent him or her to me. I would assume an air of injured dignity and, with a reproving look, utter, "What kind of polysyllabic, elongated phraseology is this! What hypocrisy and deceit! The next time they ask you such a question and you do not know the answer, just say, 'Not knowing for a certainty, I experience a slight hesitancy which prohibits me from imparting the desired information.' Don't let it appear as though your understanding, however, is beyond his comprehension." Then I returned to my work without a smile. The youngster walked away in a coma.

From the time Hoboken became a city in 1855 until 1915, the community had the mayor and council form of government. Two councilmen were elected from each of the five wards and, with the duly elected mayor, directed city affairs.

Then in 1915 the citizens of Hoboken voted in the commission form of city government with mayor and four commissioners-at-large. Under the Walsh Act elimination primaries could not be held so that, say, the ten highest candidates having the greatest number of votes could run at the final election. Out of fifty-one candidates running for office under the change in city government, only five were to be elected. Gustav Bach, James Londrigan, Bernard N. McFeely, and Patrick R. Griffin received the winning votes as Democrats, while one lone Republican, Harry L. Schmulling, was chosen.

But political affiliation in Hoboken had not always proved a stumbling block to the officeholder. For instance, shortly before the people of the mile-square city voted in the commission form of government, the Republicans had gained political control of the Council. With expedient flexibility, however, two of the newly elected Republicans changed their political faith overnight and, joining the Democratic faction, made it unnecessary for the outvoted Democrats on the city payroll to yield their positions to members of the Republican party.

Schmulling, originally called by the Democrats "Billy Verdon's Straw Man," likewise found the Democratic influence too overwhelming. His apostasy from the Republican party in 1915–16 to the Griffin forces rankled deep in the heart of William P. Verdon, the Republican leader.

The election campaign of May, 1919, raged hot and furious. Verdon condemned Schmulling in the *Hudson Observer* of May 6 in unmistakable terms: "He has voted in the Commission with the four other Griffin men for every piece of jobbery, including the nefarious sewer contracts, that has been perpetrated. He has been with the men he formerly so loudly denounced and has joined them in doing the very things he was wont to denounce them for doing."

The Citizens Non-Partisan League advertised blatantly in the *Hudson Observer* the shortcomings of the city commissioners up for re-election: "Under the present administration gangs of notorious characters, both male and female, have infested the city. Political machines foster and encourage gangsters. You won't rid our city of gangsters by electing machine politicians to office. Rid the city of gangsters! Beat the political machine!"

The Democrats countered with:

> DO NOT SUBSTITUTE INEXPERIENCED MEN FOR OFFICIALS OF PROVED EFFICIENCY!
> Do not unseat a competent, harmonious board of commissioners for untried candidates. Whereas . . . the Democratic City Committee of the City of Hoboken has unselfishly sought and now continues to strive for the election to public office in Hoboken of persons preeminently qualified, to the end that our city should be intelligently, liberally, and economically governed. . . .

On May 7 the Citizens Non-Partisan League promised no forced contributions from city employees' salaries to "perpetuate a political machine's power." Police and Fire Department promotions would take place on the basis of service and ability rather than favor and political pull.

On the ninth they ran another advertisement asking why the work on the Seventh, Eleventh, and Fifteenth Street sewers had been stopped. The commissioners had already paid $300,000 over contract prices to the contractors. The commissioners had failed to insert in the sewer contract any time limit for completion of the work.

According to the League, Crichfield of the Hoboken Construction Company had repaved Washington Street at $45,000 more than the fair figure. Crichfield's associates had never been revealed, though, according to Verdon, Schmulling as a Republican had charged four years before that Griffin and McFeely had been interested in the construction business.

Upon Schmulling's election, stated Verdon in the advertisement, he deserted to Griffin. Of course the Hoboken Construction Company landed the sewer contracts without a time clause. The commissioners, after making the overpayment of $300,000, found the work two-thirds finished, the company dissolved, and its equipment sold.

One thousand persons attended the Citizens Non-Partisan League rally at St. Mary's Hall on the ninth, but twenty-five hundred jammed the Democratic rally at the same place on the tenth.

Added fuel for the flames was heaped on by Judge Richard Doherty. The judge threatened Hoboken officials with prosecution if they did not enforce the law against permitting horse-racing poolrooms to flourish in the city.

On Election Day, May 13, 1919, County Judge Doherty appeared at Hoboken City Hall with William Verdon to receive one hundred warrant servers en route from Newark. They had been deputized by the government to serve warrants for the arrest of illegal registrants issued by Doherty on Verdon's complaint.

Mayor Griffin flew into a rage, although Verdon had advised him of the intended action well ahead of time. When the men arrived, marching in military fashion through the streets of Hoboken, at the City Hall, they were placed under arrest by Griffin, who claimed that the men had been brought in for illegal voting. The charge was, of course, preposterous, but it served its purpose. The men were marched to the local armory, fed coffee and doughnuts by the smirking Democrats, and the voting went on, although Verdon asserted that all polling places were being watched by authorities ready to serve warrants for violations. The men, many of them ex-soldiers and sailors, were later discharged. County Judge Doherty in turn arrested Griffin and one of his aides for obstructing justice.

When the case came up for trial before Supreme Court Justice Swayze, he refused to consider charges against Doherty (who, the Democrats claimed, had acted beyond his judicial authority) and dismissed charges against the Newark deputies. One Newark editor called the 1919 Hoboken election row "the worst Hudson County has ever presented."

How did the election turn out? Why, the Citizens Non-Partisan League received an overwhelming defeat, and the Democrats carried every place on the new Commission.

Though defeated, Billy Verdon polled a generous vote. He voted Republican in May, 1920, with the same old fight.

They still tell the story of Stew Kelly, the vagrant who was jailed for illegal registration prior to an election in the thirties. The Registration Board charged him with giving his address as that of a local Hoboken stable.

When the judge asked him whether the charge was true, Stew said, "Yes, your Honor, I live in that stable."

The judge hinted that Stew ought to be ashamed of living in such a lowly, malodorous place.

Stew retorted, "Jesus was born in a stable. Why should I be ashamed?" The judge dismissed the case.

William P. O'Toole, an assistant in the tax collector's office and tax title searcher in the municipal tax office, oldest Hoboken city employee rating forty-six years of service, tells the story of the Irishman from the Third District of the Third Ward who insisted on voting against the Democratic candidates.

When challenged as to citizenship, the son of Erin declared that his citizenship papers were pasted on the back of his kitchen door. The challengers insisted on seeing them before granting permission to vote.

The Irishman returned home, took the door from its hinges, and carried it back to the polling place. Sure enough, there, after the soot and grime had been rubbed off, were his citizenship papers pasted, face showing, on the door. Unfortunately, the information the challenger wanted was on the reverse of the papers. When the Irishman found that out, he tried to peel the paper off the door without ruining it. No luck. He had to carry back his door. The Democrats had one less vote against them.

Griffin remained mayor under the new setup until 1926; then Gustav Bach took over the office until 1930. When the county clerkship called, Bach relinquished his position to the then Director of Public Safety, Bernard N. McFeely. An ex-trucking contractor and leader of the Hoboken Democrats, McFeely held sway as mayor for the next seventeen years, until 1947. At one time city councilman with Griffin, McFeely was an accomplished horseman with his own stables at Closter, New Jersey. His particular accomplishment was hurdle-jumping.

In 1947 a five-man team headed by Fred M. DeSapio, rattan furniture manufacturer and marketer, together with Michael Borelli, George Fitzpatrick (now freeholder), Stephen Mongiello, and John J. Grogan campaigned so vigorously and efficiently that it defeated the McFeely forces by 11,000 to 8,000. DeSapio became the new mayor despite Grogan's expectation as high man that he would be voted the office by the Council. Hoboken turned out in gala style, 15,000 strong, to witness the oath-taking.

However, within a few months' time a split occurred. DeSapio, with Commissioners Borelli and Mongiello lined up on one side of the fence, with the minority, Grogan and Fitzpatrick, on the other.

In 1951 fifty candidates made it known that they would throw in their hats for election to one of the five available offices. On Election Day, November, 1951, Mayor Fred DeSapio, Michael Borelli, and Thomas A. Gallo—all pro-DeSapio—with John J. Grogan and Edward Barrone, Hoboken banker, were chosen by the people of Hoboken. The organization revealed the three DeSapio men ranged against the other two as the minority block, and that DeSapio majority proceeded to strip of power Grogan and Barrone, as Murray and Witkowski were recently dealt with by the Kenny administration in Jersey City.

I used to know Barrone's father. He would often tell me he had a good boy who would "go places." One of our present aldermen, Barrone was nominated for the office of county clerk, considered the top political plum. He was elected in November, 1953.

Alas, the old order changeth, for on November 4, 1952, by a margin of 106 votes the people of Hoboken decided to repudiate the Walsh Act and return, under the Faulkner Act, to its old councilmanic form of government dropped in 1915. Jersey City and Bayonne referendums indicated the people's continuing preference for the current commission type.

This revised form of civic government requires a mayor, three councilmen-at-large, and six councilmen respectively representing the six wards in Hoboken—ten members in all on the City Council.

Thomas J. Wren, lone survivor of the mayor-council form of government existing in the city prior to 1915, was councilman from the Third Ward from 1905–15. He has asserted that the change certainly should hold each councilman accountable to his particular ward. Wren, in 1903 a tavern owner at Fourth and Grand streets, rose from City Hall custodian in 1911 through city license inspector, secretary to former Commissioner Thomas McAleer, to administrative assistant under present Mayor John J. Grogan.

On May 11, 1953, the electorate asserted their choice of John J. Grogan as mayor under the new type of civic administration. DeSapio, somewhat stunned, was suddenly blotted out of the political picture by the man with whom, six years before, he had formed a coalition to drive out the McFeely forces.

Grogan carried with him a majority of the nine-man Council, all three councilmen-at-large being his choices: Edward J. Barrone, Stephen E. Mongiello, and Louis De Pascale. Mrs. Loretta Sagendorf (First Ward), Thomas O'Reilly (Fifth Ward), Edward Murnane (Second Ward), and Joseph Bartletta (Sixth

Ward), also his supporters, were elected. DeSapio followers elected were Deputy Mayor Thomas J. Turso, who was chosen councilman from the Third Ward, and Matthew Ronga, from the Fourth Ward.

Popular "Johnnie" Lewis, for over thirty years secretary of the Board of Education, directed, as chairman of the Democratic City Committee, the campaign efforts that resulted in the latest Democratic victory.

My good friend Max Miller, once candidate for mayor of Weehawken, once remarked that the solidarity of our nation is being threatened by the tendency of each little political demagogue to set up his own "kingdom" over which he wants to rule as lord and master. Unwittingly, perhaps, Max had hit upon one of the glaring inconsistencies in the attitude of the American people toward politics: often they relegate to overbearing, selfish politicians the rights which they have for centuries striven to gain. Why? Indifference? Laziness? Selfish engrossment in their own pursuits?

Is democracy having a relapse?

CHAPTER XIV

Aha! My Proud Beauty!

From autumn, 1928, through 1929, Christopher Morley and Cleon Throckmorton attempted in the old Rialto Theater what St. John Ervine later extolled as "a move to decentralize the theater from Broadway."

In the ten months following opening night, September 3, 1928, about 225,000 people visited Hoboken to hiss the villain and clap hands and feet in time with the music.

Morley got the idea on a visit to Hoboken to see Throckmorton at the Rialto, 118 Hudson Street. He saw such possibilities in the old Rialto Theater with its colorful, worldly atmosphere that he and Throckmorton leased it for six weeks. Enlisting a troupe of young actors, the two would-be producers pulled in Harry Wagstaff Gribble to direct. The company opened with *The Barker* after a publicity campaign in which such slogans as "She troupes to conquer!" were flaunted before New York's eyes. They rechristened Hoboken "the Seacoast of Bohemia" and made Manhattan aware that the Hudson Tubes rolled from New York to the land of real pleasure in thirty minutes.

On opening night a few visitors from Manhattan, upright Hoboken citizens, and young men in shirt sleeves in the front row made up the audience. The take (tickets—fifty and seventy-five cents) of $211 was not too reassuring, but apparently the fun of that first night for everybody overcompensated for the lack of financial success.

Morley, in white flannel trousers, kept up a continuous curtain speech from 8:30 to 9:00 o'clock—as long as he heard hammering behind the curtain. Then it rose on one of the sets painted on yacht canvas Throckmorton had finished from City Island.

After the show the management invited the audience up on the stage for refreshments of beer and pretzels and dancing on the sawdust boards. Local talent provided stunts like the singing of old-time songs, and a member of the cast rendered "The Face on the Barroom Floor."

Morley made it quite clear to his public and the theatrical world that he was attempting no refinement of the American theater. On the contrary, he stated, it "had been improved perhaps too much; its essential ingredient of harmless fun had almost been forgotten."

He published a pamphlet by way of expressing his point of view: he did not intend to uplift, or shock, or improve public taste, nor was his project in the nature of little theater or drama league. It was neither highbrow, nor arty, nor a "clinic for the explanation of the obscure woes of the nervous system." He simply wanted to restore good clean fun to the theater. His melodramas, he insisted, would be played straight—not overplayed. He learned, as his weekly presentations came before the public, that the audience had to be really educated to the type of 1860 melodrama he offered.

He sold the pamphlet for five cents, but playfully suggested that edition collectors pay one dollar for it. About one hundred persons did.

Up to the seventeenth week of stock, the enterprise did not break even. At the end of fourteen weeks the company had taken in $25,000 but was still $20,000 in the red. Free tickets to New York friends induced few to risk the perilous journey across the Hudson. At times when the racks of unsold tickets threatened a rather empty house, the management would send blocks of tickets to Hoboken firm employees, such as the telephone company. The local merchants displaying Rialto posters distributed white discount slips to their customers with which, plus a quarter, one could obtain a balcony seat. Members of the staff and the cast used complimentary tickets to tip waiters in Hoboken restaurants.

In the business office, the scrubwoman's tiny closet, Morley figured up a deficit varying from five hundred to one thousand dollars each week. A take of three thousand dollars a week would, he claimed, support the cast and enable the staff to present a creditable production.

Morley and Throckmorton tried to attract New Yorkers by introducing novelty in advertising and theatrical presentation. To establish the theater with the local patrons, they presented stock, varying it with the occasional tryout of a new play. Morley hoped eagerly that *Where the Blue Begins* would be given a *première,* but he had to wait several years for that event in Hawaii.

William Faversham, watching his son Bill, Jr., perform in the cast of *The Spider,* asserted that the spirit of Elizabethan fun that dominated the audience on the night of his visit particularly impressed him.

The Last of Mrs. Cheyney prompted one buxom female to leave at the end of the first act. She walked up to the box office window and shouted, "Say, this is surely one hell of a show!" Then she stuck her chewing gum on the glass and vanished.

Sometimes a Hoboken housewife, after purchasing a ticket, would insist on being taken into the theater and shown her seat in order that she might find out whether it would fit her.

St. John Ervine, after his visit to Hoboken, gave no little impetus to the Rialto's popularity when he commended the venture in his column. He suggested holding plays longer than a week apiece. The management had been toying with the same idea because the burden of presenting one play while the same cast was rehearsing for next week's production and preparing sets was beginning to wear down the troupe.

The *esprit de corps* of the little band manifested itself in the play itself. After the Monday night performance of the week's new presentation, the cast used to gather at a Hoboken tavern for a songfest. In time this custom became the habit of many New Yorkers visiting Hoboken. One Hoboken chophouse built a new wing. Another old hotel found business in March, 1929, booming from $10,000 to $52,000 in one month.

Rehearsals usually took place in the basement of Meyer's Hotel. Later the success of the Morley-Throckmorton venture turned the place into a rathskeller with yodeling and zither playing and all the Tyrolean atmosphere.

Pleased to Meet You marked the first two-week holdover. During its production Dennis Cleugh, one of the best loved members of the company, died of a heart attack on his way home in a taxi. Completing his autobiography, Mrs. Cleugh and Morley had it published in 1930 as *Wanderer's End.*

Broadway and *Old Heidelberg* indicated that the second week of performances showed a progressive tendency to build up receipts. Morley tells at this time of the agony of waiting on Forty-fifth Street, New York City, for the arrival of the limousine of the wealthy patron who was meeting the next day's payroll. Thirty minutes late, the car rolled up with the financial lifeblood. It carried, symbolically, as a radiator cap emblem a crystal snail.

Morley introduced a rhymed prologue before the play to point out the pictorial features on the Rialto's old curtain. At matinees the audience stepped up on stage for grape juice. The reluctant ladies were shooed up by the police officer on duty: "Come on, girls; don't cost you nothing! Go on upstage and meet the folks! Have a glass of punch!"

A sudden upswing in fortune took place in the middle of a forty-week season. Morley discovered Dion Boucicault's incomplete original script of *After Dark,* a London underworld drama of the 1860's, at the New York Public Library. He had it photostated and gathered his staff for its immediate revision. He assured everybody that Boucicault, because he had been a past master at adapting other people's ideas, "would have been much pleased by our work on his script, for he never invented an original plot in his life. . . ." Morley added the second title: *or Neither Maid, Wife, nor Widow.*

Without even a rehearsal with sets, the cast headed by Marcia Hanan and Larry Bolton threw themselves into the play with zest. Local place names took the place of others originally mentioned by the author. Eliza's leap into the North River and the locomotive scene with a D., L. & W. train brought the audience to the edges of their seats. The spot, according to Morley, when the play registered a direct, unmistakable hit was the tingling moment in the cabaret scene when Bolton sang a tear-jerking love song.

Planned for a three-week run, *After Dark* really played to capacity houses for six months, netting $150,000. Jack Dempsey brought a crowd of his old ring friends over the river to see the play. For a local minister who saw it, the play evoked bygone memories of earlier melodrama.

Morley began to take money plunges. He bought the old Rialto for $85,000 and paid $68,000 for the old Fletcher Ironworks next door. The latter he turned into an amusing clubhouse.

At the end of six weeks of *After Dark,* the management, after having set up a business office near the waterfront, ceased making ticket reservations by telephone. The Hoboken telephone exchange, despite the four lines recently installed to handle the sudden flood of ticket requests, declared that it was receiving four thousand more calls per hour for the Rialto than could be connected. Cash poured in, but much of it the management had to return because of "sell-outs."

Then Morley leased the Lyric Theater, now torn down, then used for everything from medicine shows to prize fights. He conceived the grand idea of reviving Charles M. Barras' *The Black Crook,* played about 1867 in Niblo's Gardens, London.

The production, necessarily lavish, taxed the powers of physical endurance of all associated with it. Christopher Morley, worn out from lack of sleep, almost drowned in his own bathtub at the Continental Hotel when he attempted to freshen up before the first performance and accidentally dozed off. The opening lasted from nine o'clock to one-thirty in the morning. Installed electric fans kept the patrons cool for the three months of its run, closing on May 29, 1929. Agnes de Mille danced in the production at Hoboken on May 12, 1929.

But Morley spent, at the height of his success, too lavishly even for the copious flow of cash that swamped the box office. He believed that his type of production had come to Hoboken to stay and discounted the possibility of its being a passing fad for the curious. In fact, Morley had plans for rebuilding the Hoboken waterfront to accommodate those New Yorkers who liked suburban atmosphere. Real estate in the vicinity of his theaters boomed, and many a tavern did a land-office business. Much of Morley's profits went back into Hoboken real estate. Expansion followed too soon upon the heels of his ridding the enterprise of its heavy indebtedness. In fact, he was later to lose the Lyric because his company could not pay the owner, Victor Rivara, a three-thousand-dollar debt. In consequence, Rivara was to padlock the place.

The Hoboken Chamber of Commerce expressed, on April 10, 1929, concern at the rowdyism perpetrated by the outsiders coming to the city to view the Morley-Throckmorton productions. With gratitude to the company for the boost it had given Hoboken business and real estate, nevertheless the Chamber feared a series of incidents that might tend to blacken the name of the city which had not, in the past, enjoyed too fair a reputation for law and order.

Likewise, the speakeasies were thriving in the city. A poll reported in the *Hudson Observer* on April 25, 1930, nominated Hoboken as the wettest city in New Jersey. Needle beer flowed like water. After reaching the saturation point, many a roisterer would land in the audience at the Rialto and expand his gassed-up ego by shouting comments at the actors, clapping and hissing in the wrong spots, and generally disrupting everybody's enjoyment of the play.

For a time members of the audience began pitching small change on the stage in what they considered a traditional manner of showing appreciation. The management succeeded in stopping that practice when the audience realized the danger to which they exposed the actors.

The summer of 1929 seemed to put a period to the Morley-Throckmorton boom. On July 1, 1929, the final padlocking of saloons by the Prohibition agents alleviated to some extent the disturbances at the Rialto, but the attraction of Hoboken for the alcoholically inclined was downgraded, likewise.

In the fall of 1929, *The Star of Bengal* and *The Shoe String Revue* with Sterling Halloway failed to draw the customary crowds. In June, Gribble had already started to sue Morley and Throckmorton for recovery of royalties allegedly due him. He had requested an accounting of the company's books and stated that money due him was being withheld. He had been promised 20 per cent above $2,200 gross weekly receipts. Morley and Throckmorton had not renewed his contract when it expired and had turned down his offer to buy into their Hoboken enterprises.

Morley wrote a rather humorous open reply to these charges. He claimed that Gribble was hissing his own villains. Ironically, as the legally designated representative of the Hoboken enterprises, Gribble was faced with the possibility of being served with papers in his own suit.

Western Electric leased the Lyric on April 22, 1930, for experimentation with the "talkies."

The popularity of Morley's plays dwindled to such a low in the late fall of 1929 that the company closed down. On February 18, 1930, the old Rialto was knocked down at auction to a Robert J. Adams for one hundred dollars plus costs. Adams reopened it the following autumn as a glorified vaudeville house.

The death knell of the Morley-Throckmorton enterprises sounded on April 16, 1932, when the officers faced bankruptcy proceedings.

The lights on the Seacoast of Bohemia had gone out.

CHAPTER XV

One Moose to Another

During the thirty years of my membership in the Loyal Order of Moose, I have made a number of friends. As Past Governor of Hoboken Lodge No. 317, I regard my association with this fraternal order productive of many pleasant, unforgettable experiences. In fact, I frequented the Moose Club so regularly one summer that the society column of the *Hudson Observer* ran the item: "John Field of the secretarial staff at City Hall is spending his vacation on the Moose Club stoop."

And the good-natured forbearance of Hein "Snoot" Schmidt, whose tavern once located at Eleventh and Washington streets we used to patronize after an occasional meeting! The boys visited the place, sometimes, just to admire his twelve-inch-long handlebar mustache. Once in a while, for devilment, a gang of us would descend upon his place, devour the free lunch like a scourge of locusts, and leave without even ordering a beer. Out of one eye we would watch "Snoot" chew that mustache in nervous indignation.

Yet we gave him our custom quite generously in the long run.

"Snoot" was at his best during a thunderstorm. After each heavy clap of thunder, he used to exclaim, "Ach, dot's gut, mine freunds! It gives only Lohman. He's chust made a strike. Maybe it gives dot he bowls mit Kraus. Or maybe Fritz Bergman is up next. Ah, dey was der gut Schuetzens! Poor old Hein, I join dem soon. Ach, so, drinks auf das Haus!" We drank to his making a strike every time he rolled the celestial ball.

There were times, too, when tragedy struck down old friends. I narrowly missed, one Saturday in 1943, being one of the party. That year I had planned to attend the Moose State Convention at Passaic, and Barney Kahler, Gus Treischman, John Brennan (Governor of the Hoboken Lodge), Stephen Darago, and Eddie O'Dea were to drive over in the morning and pick me up so that we could make the trip together. Through unforeseen delay, I failed to meet them on time with the result that they drove to Passaic without me and I did not attend the gathering.

After the convention about twelve o'clock at night on their way home, their car crashed into the iron roadblock at the bridge over Berry's Creek. The road was open, but the speed of the car was too great for them to negotiate the curve and cross the bridge. They hit the open gate and the bridge sides. Kahler, Treischman were killed instantly, and Brennan died in the hospital. Darago and O'Dea, after long hospitalization, finally recovered.

A decidedly less tragic experience of mine concerns an influential member of the Moose, Oscar Keisdorf. A sucker for the ponies, Oscar superintended a large automobile sales agency in Hoboken; he gave me my first and last experience with the turf in 1925. He asked me to attend the races at the Empire City Racetrack.

When we arrived, he purchased tickets that admitted us to the paddock and the grandstand. Reaching for his wallet, he drew out one hundred dollars. "Here, Doc, put this down on a horse! One condition: don't tell me the name of the plug on which you bet!"

After the races we met at the appointed spot.

"How did you make out?"

Thereupon I told him that I had not placed the bet because I had not known how. I offered to return the money to him, but he said, "Keep it. I just lost a thousand on a bad hunch. We'll go home broke, but we'll go home happy!"

Like twin Brewsters with their millions, we plotted the surest means of ridding ourselves of that one hundred dollars. We taxied to New York City. At dinner we liquidated eight martinis between us, but steak and trimmings brought us back to normal for Raymond Hitchcock's *Hitchy Koo,* then one of the latest musicals.

After the show we night-clubbed at Will Oakland's, where we blew in most of the remaining money. At least we had the pleasure of spending the money bit by bit, rather than losing it on an unobliging nag.

One Sunday in the days when it was considered one of the country's wonders, Brother Bob, Al Knight, and I, three dedicated Moose, took the excursion to Mauch Chunk, Pennsylvania, lauded as the Switzerland of America. Each of us looked forward to visiting the burning coal mines. Bob particularly was determined to ride the famed switchback and looked forward to the thrill like a twelve-year-old. Al came along just for the company. His sophistication precluded any show of anticipation. He adopted the attitude of the man who has just been where you are now arriving. He began to take the wind out of our sails on the Lehigh Valley train on the way up.

"Aw, you're crazy, taking this long railroad run just to see a few mountains. You can't even get a drink in Pennsylvania on Sunday."

"Look, Al," Bob fired back, in an effort to bolster up his enthusiasm, "I'm doing something I've wanted to do for years. You didn't have to come."

"Sure, sure! You go up the side of a hill in a cable car to see what? A view! Ain't we got enough to see from the Woolworth Building? Besides, I got calluses, sitting on these hard seats."

"You got a locked mind, Al. You ought to get out and see a little of the world," I suggested.

We swayed and swung our way into the diner, where Al picked to shreds each item on the menu.

At Mauch Chunk, Al had to admit that the Lehigh River had gouged out quite a deep cut in the hills, but he added, "Nothing beats the Palisades, to my mind."

When we had taken our seats in the open, trolley-like cable car for the ten-mile trip around the mountains, all by gravity, he started to worry. "This thing don't look safe to me."

I tried to quiet him. "A thick cable which is attached to the down-going car pulls this one up."

"What if the cable breaks?"

Bob found his opening and delivered a body blow: "Why, Al, you jump. That's the exciting part. You never know when she'll break!"

Al groaned as the little car started its ascent.

"Look at that scene spreading out below us!"

"Boy, there's beauty for you!"

"It's not as steep as I thought."

Then I looked at Al. His eyes were glued to the car floor, and he was holding onto the seat in front rigidly for dear life. Little beads of sweat moistened his forehead. I nudged Bob and grinned.

At the top we almost lifted him from the car. "You know, Al," I remarked casually, "you must have vertigo."

"Better see your doctor, son," Bob cheered him on.

We entered the pavilion, a word coming from the Latin for "butterfly," many of which already filled Al's head. The head waiter ushered us into the dining room.

While we were looking over the menu, a gentleman stepped up to our table. He pointed to my Moose button and extended his hand.

"Welcome, fellow Moose!" and he thumbed his own lapel emblem. Just waking up to the fact that they, too, were wearing Moose buttons, Bob and Al recognized the affiliation with a handclasp.

"How about being my guests?" And our expansive fellow Moose pulled out the fourth chair and sat down. "I'm George Hinckman." Bob and I said we'd be happy to dine with him. Al was noncommittal.

Mr. Hinckman seemed to know just how and what to order and called the waiter by his first name. "I own the place, boys, so don't hesitate to ask for what you want. Four bottles of Schlitz, Tony!"

I guess the Schlitz did it, for Al started in, full blast.

"Brother Hinckman, have you ever come up on that contraption?"

"You mean the switchback? Often, Brother Knight, often. I trust you enjoyed the view?"

"View! I never took my eyes off the floor. I was scared to death. Do you know that thing is a trap?"

"The safety commission doesn't seem to think so. In case a cable should break, there are devices for stopping the cars."

I tried to pour a little oil on the waters. "Mr. Knight has spells of dizziness. He really shouldn't have come."

"Now, look here, Doc! Stop calling me dizzy! Any human being with sense in his head wouldn't risk his life in that bucket of death!"

Mr. Hinckman pushed his empty clam shells aside as if he had just been challenged to a duel. "Isn't that a rather strong way of putting it, Brother Knight?"

"Hell, no! Besides, you people got no monopoly on scenery up here! Why, the view ain't nothin' like what you get from the Statue of Liberty."

"A lot of people think differently, Brother Knight. The little railway brings us people who are just agog with the ride and the view from this point."

Bob stepped on Al's right foot under the table. No luck.

"Well, I'm not agog by a long shot. The owner of that switchback must take us for a pack of suckers, dragging us to the top of this overgrown hill. I wish I could tell him a thing or two."

"You are doing rather well right now, Brother Knight. I'm also the owner of that switchback."

Al well-nigh drowned in his turtle soup, and I choked on my pumpernickel.

Red-faced Moose are, generally speaking, unusual phenomena.

"Forward in the good!—onward in the right!"

CHAPTER XVI

No Place Like Home

In 1930, three hundred years after the purchase of Hoboken Hackingh from the Indians, the city celebrated with a pageant depicting the historical event. In 1955 the mile-square community commemorates its one hundredth anniversary of incorporation as a city.

Today shipbuilding firms, paper manufacturers, soap makers, food warehouses, food plants, such as tea, baking powder, chocolate, candy confections, miscellaneous brands, dot the borders of the city—just a few of the industrial establishments that have located, partly because of civic invitation and partly because of commercial advantage, in Hoboken, especially after 1920.

Perhaps this influx of industrial plants has been a chief factor in the departure from the city of many former residents. The 1920 census figures covering the community's population indicate a total of 68,166, but in 1950 only 50,017 people resided in Hoboken. While a 9,000 drop occurred between 1920 and 1930, another 9,000 people left the city between 1930 and 1940. Then the population seems to have leveled off because the decline in numbers is fewer than one hundred persons between 1940 and 1950.

Causes? Air pollution and crowding out of residential areas by expanding industry have led many to find homes elsewhere. Certainly the young people look for home sites in localities where there is more open country. It may be that Hoboken, like several other Hudson County communities, is fast becoming an "older folks'" city, where the parents live out their lives while their children locate elsewhere.

Hudson Street and Castle Point Terrace between Eighth and Tenth streets still breathe a kind of stately dignity. Stevens Institute and its campus reflect idyllic charm of the last half of the eighteenth century. The United States Post Office, erected on River Street in 1932, and the business office buildings clustering below the City Hall near the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western Terminal seem like a bit of transplanted Manhattan. The inspection depot and parasite-receiving station for the use of the Bureau of Entomology of the United States Department of Agriculture, government-erected in 1932, lines the shore side of River Street and shoulders the Port of New York Authority docks in officious impressiveness.

Yet, a survey based on the 1940 census showed that 97 per cent of Hoboken's 3,980 buildings were built before 1920, that 66 per cent were built before 1900. The statistics also reveal that only 10½ per cent of these dwellings were occupied by their owners. The other buildings belonged to absentee landlords.

The city is faced, too, with the problem of owning condemned buildings which it must either recondition or tear down, under pressure from the State of New Jersey. On the horns of a dilemma, Hoboken will lose money either way one looks at the situation. It could renovate these slum dwellings, but many of the tenants owe the city thousands of dollars in rent and will continue to do so as long as they have no means to pay. Hence, the city has been receiving no revenue to offset such reconditioning costs. Yet, should it permit the buildings to be demolished, it must accept the responsibility of caring for the evicted indigent families. The Welfare Department has already been through the expensive experience of housing families in local hotels until such time as it could find quarters for them. The same problem faces the city, should it force condemnation proceedings against private owners of buildings actually not fit for habitation.

On its part, the city has recently tried to sidestep its problem by offering for sale its city-owned properties, stipulating that any of such properties already condemned by the state must be reconditioned or else. Suppose the new owner decides to tear down the condemned building and construct an industrial plant, will not the city have to face its relief responsibilities toward the evicted families just as well?

One civic leader suggests that co-operation among the city departments of police, fire, health, and building inspection would result in a correction of many of the deplorable housing conditions existing in Hoboken.

Certain patterns of action echo civic attitudes of other years. The Hoboken Planning Board the other day faced the problem of illicit garbage dumping just as, in 1891, Mayor Stanton warned offenders about the same abuse. And the Police Department resents, just as it did fifty or more years ago, the tendency of the riffraff and the floaters of the central east coast to concentrate on Hoboken.

Vandalism, a problem involving juvenile delinquency all over the country, frequently requires the weekly replacement of from one hundred to one hundred and fifty damaged windows in industrial plants.

Furthermore, the Hoboken waterfront has often been the scene of violence resulting from union disputes and, especially in the light of a comparatively recent murder and the Crime Commission investigations, has incurred a slightly unsavory reputation therefrom. The fact of the matter is that what happens in Hoboken happens in any strategically located waterfront locality. Fortunately in recent months powers higher than the city authorities are exercising the necessary control to clear up waterfront union racketeering.

My experience with labor unions as such can be narrowed down to one afternoon in the mid-thirties in the company of one of my friends.

My friend, a union organizer, asked me one summer day to go with him to the ballgame at the Polo Grounds. After the ferry trip to New York, he put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Now to do a little business. We need funds for this trip, pal. Just do as I say."

Mystified, I accompanied him to an office downtown. Before entering, he whispered, "You're my secretary, see?"

I didn't, but walked with him into the office of the president of the concern. We talked for a while about the labor situation, and the boss passed cigars. He then left the office to return later with a small white envelope which he handed to my friend.

With, "So long! See you again!" we found ourselves walking toward the subway. I still could make nothing of the incident. "What's it all about?" I asked him.

He opened the envelope and slyly revealed one hundred dollars.

"See that, Doc? I give him a call once a year. We got an agreement. I get this for not organizing his shop."

Hoboken now looks to its new mayor, John J. Grogan, national president of the C.I.O. Shipbuilders Union, for sound civic leadership. One of nine children, Mr. Grogan, forty years old, a former plumber's helper, was born at 253 Sixth Street, Hoboken. He attended parochial schools until a ring career beckoned him, but one knockout convinced him that it was not his calling.

Next, he assisted a plumber during the day at the Bethlehem Steel yards while at night he studied at St. Peter's College, Jersey City. In time his co-workers elected him their union treasurer.

World War II provided him with military experience. His reputation induced Secretary Forrestal, after the Armistice, to send him to Europe to bring back a report on the effectiveness of the Marshall Plan.

The next step took him to the New Jersey Assembly. Finally, in 1947, Mr. Grogan was elected a city commissioner. Expecting to become mayor because he had been top vote-getter in the election, Mr. Grogan was highly disappointed. But a politician wielding more power in city Democratic circles saw to it that

Grogan got the lowest job, commissioner of parks and public property, and told him to "watch the parks."

Seventeen years ago he married Eileen McNulty, an Irish entertainer. The couple has two children, James and Patricia. Mrs. Grogan, since the age of three, has been charming audiences with Irish songs and dances. She, her brother Peter, and Mrs. Ann McNulty, her mother, at the accordion, have recorded about one hundred and fifty Irish ballads and toured the United States and Canada, as well as having appeared on radio and television.

But at 339 Garden Street, Hoboken, she puts away the top hat, the bright bow tie, the Eton jacket, when she is not on tour and enjoys just being a mother in her pastel-colored house with the white picket fence and green-and-white striped awnings.

If Mr. Grogan will live up to his reputation as a straightforward supporter of the just and the good, there is hope for Hoboken.

I have tried to teach my son John, now in his twenty-first year, some of that idealism. He is entering his senior year at Jersey City State Teachers College in preparation for elementary school teaching, with special interest in science and visual aids.

Despite the physical handicap of an unsound leg, I still optimistically believe in the just and the good. Facing the Medusa head of polio doesn't have to kill joy in life. Others have faced the ordeal and conquered. Just to mention a few in the entertainment and business worlds, Dinah Shore, William Cullen, Ida Lupino, and Walter O'Keefe were afflicted. Basil O'Connor, Arthur Godfrey, Burt Lancaster, and Jack Parr had members of their immediate families as victims. June Allyson wore braces for a number of years. Helen Hayes's daughter died of polio. Doris Day and Don McNeill felt the sting of it. Chief Justice Earl Warren's daughter Nina contracted the disease.

In the long run, my handicap has not prevented me from enjoying life. My family, especially my wife and my son, have eased my trying moments. The fellowship of my Hoboken friends has added a piquancy to the sauce of living that leaves a fellow with an assurance of the fact that basically people are or can be worth their "salt."

Even so, people make up a community, a community like Hoboken. I have faith in their ability to make it a good, a better, city, for any halo, luminous or dull, will be their halo. Any power will be their power; any glory, their glory.

In Passing

I, John Perkins Field, have permitted John Leroy Bailey, in the writing of this book, to enter into my personality to the extent of reliving verbally my life. I have related to him, from time to time, stories reminiscent of early Hoboken and my associations with it, all of which we have pieced together into a fairly simple pattern.

While I did most of the editing of copy, Mr. Bailey did practically all of the writing. Furthermore, my accounts of the city's bygone days induced him to dig deeply into the archives of the Hoboken Public Library for the wealth of historical and contemporary material supplementing my personal narrative in the book.

Our literary partnership has had its drawbacks: I, confined to my home by ill health and an unreliable leg; he with his exceedingly busy program as a college teacher. Yet we hope that you, the reader, will receive as much pleasure in reading these pages as we had in composing them.

Furthermore, the help and the advice of many have made possible this little book. Writing and editing are important, but the verification of facts that comes from the reading of the manuscript by those who have had first-hand acquaintance with the situations, the places, and the people mentioned herein has helped me to correct, in many cases, inaccuracies.

City Clerk Arthur C. Malone, Director of Public Safety Arthur Marotta, Deputy Fire Chief Lawrence Ross, Fireman John Lisa, Marie Van Den Bulck, the Sheridan family, Rose Berkowitz, Margaret O'Brien, George J. Bach, Adele Greany, Benjamin Bier, the Lombardi family, Virginia and Ralph Spada, William O'Toole, Marion Van Osten, Agnes Conway, Agnes and Mary Nolan, Walton Williams, and Dr. John F. Lewis have, in turn, made suggestions and corrections in the manuscript and sometimes provided fresh material. Mr. Charles P. Stalling, executive vice-president of the Hoboken Chamber of Commerce, has been most helpful with his criticism. Miss Lucille Cunningham, head librarian, and the staff of the Hoboken Public Library have been most co-operative in bringing to our attention important material. As a matter of fact, a complete list of those who have offered criticism and material would cover pages.

Moreover, the members of my family have been both forbearing and indispensable. Viola Decker, my cousin, has read and criticized the manuscript; Olga Slater and Helen Arico, my sisters-in-law, have done an expert typing job; John, Jr., my son, has been my contact man, particularly responsible for the end papers in the book.

Dr. John E. Courtney made the drawing that graces the title page.

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